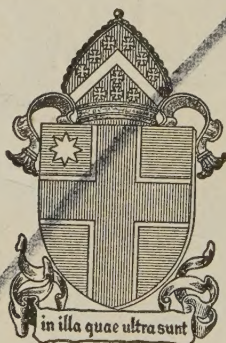


BACK TO CHRIST

BISHOP FISKE

BERKELEY DIVINITY SCHOOL
LIBRARY



From the
Brewster Collection.

Accession Number

35496.

1342.

~~515~~
Shelf Number

~~222~~

Released by
Bryn Mawr
College Library

Bc

BX 5930 .F45 1917

Fiske, Charles, Bp., 1868-1942.

Back to Christ : the wonder of His
life, the romance of His religion,
forgotten truths of His teaching, some

BACK TO CHRIST



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_S0-BAH-507

BACK TO CHRIST

THE WONDER OF HIS LIFE, THE ROMANCE OF HIS RELIGION, FORGOTTEN TRUTHS OF HIS TEACHING, SOME PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF HIS GOSPEL

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND

CHARLES FISKE, D.D., LL.D.

BISHOP COADJUTOR OF CENTRAL NEW YORK

AUTHOR OF

"The Religion of the Incarnation," "Sacrifice and Service," etc.

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

FOURTH AVENUE & 30TH STREET, NEW YORK

BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS

1917

BX
5930
.F45
1917

COPYRIGHT, 1917, BY
LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

Library
Berkeley Divinity School
140 Prospect St.
New Haven, Conn. 06511

PREFACE

THERE is nothing original in this book. If there were, I should suspect that it was not true. Here are other people's thoughts which I hope I have made my own; translations into simpler speech of what others have said in finer language. Sometimes, perhaps, the words as well as the thoughts have clung in the memory. If so, the appropriation of them will be readily pardoned. Such indebtedness is indicated and acknowledged by marks of quotation; but I have felt that to burden the pages with references, even where they were remembered, would be only an annoyance to the average reader. Those whose thoughts have been used will be glad to have them passed on, if only some one who has not known the romance of the Gospel can be made to feel it. What matters it through whom they come to know Christ better, if only they do know Him? The book is written for every-day people, who want to know Christ and would learn how to help others to know Him.

The chapters, at first glance, may not seem to hang together and the book may appear to have no consistent unity. I trust it really does

manifest a logical continuity. Three things it attempts to do:

First: To make the readers feel the wonder of our Lord's life and the beauty of His teaching, and so to give Him their devoted, personal allegiance. Sometimes religion stops there. And so—

Second: To show that He never meant such loyal followers to be left loose and unattached. There must be a Church where individual fellowship is kept strong and steady through corporate union—a Church where they are fed and strengthened; knit up into Him and so bound closely together with one another. Sometimes religion stops at that point. And so—

Third: To show that the Church is a nucleus of the Kingdom; it must move out into the community; it was established not merely to hold the believer but to save the world.

Three things: Individual attachment. Corporate union for its safeguarding. Social fellowship for its developing life.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST'S LIFE	
I. The Old, Old Story	3
II. Fable and Fact.....	17
III. The Good Physician.....	30
IV. Our Lord's Last Request.....	41
THE ROMANCE OF HIS RELIGION	
V. The Divine Companion.....	55
VI. Under the All-seeing Eye.....	68
VII. If I Could Be a Child Again.....	78
VIII. The Last Word in Religion.....	89
FORGOTTEN TRUTHS OF HIS TEACHING	
IX. Back to Christ.....	105
X. Christ and His Church.....	115
PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF HIS GOSPEL	
XI. The Old Gospel and the New Re- ligion.....	131
XII. Stained Glass Saints—and Others...	142
XIII. Christian Ideals in Business.....	155
XIV. The Church and the City.....	166
XV. Social Christianity in the Country..	178
ADDENDUM	
XVI. The Browns Choose a Church.....	199

THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST'S LIFE

BACK TO CHRIST

I

THE OLD, OLD STORY

THIS is, in brief, the story of Jesus of Nazareth. It is an old story which used to be told more often than it is now—for our fathers read their Bibles daily, talked about religion frequently, read religious books to the exclusion of many others, remembered texts and sermons as something of vital worth, and were more or less compelled to yield to a pervading religious ideality. This persistent living under the “droppings of the Gospel,” as it was called, gave character to their thought, moulded their daily attitudes and activities, and prepared them for further realizations of the divine. Whatever of greater honesty and sincerity there may be about the expression of religious feeling nowadays, and whatever of more practical efficiency we may find in religious work, there is—we cannot but feel—something lacking, something the lack of which would indicate a decline of the religious consciousness. There was an “atmosphere” of religion in those days which we miss now.

This is an attempt, in the simplest possible way, to create a similar atmosphere for one who will read these chapters. Is the old, old story read frequently now? Do we feel the wonder of it? Do we hear it told very often in a way that stills the heart? Could we tell it to others in words that would hush them into reverence?

In Palestine, nineteen centuries ago, there appeared a Travelling Rabbi of the Jews, Jesus, afterward known as the Christ. He taught, as man had never taught before, the things of God. He gave Himself unreservedly to the service of men. He was true man in all that makes up human nature. Yet those who were nearest to Him gradually came to believe that He was more than man. "By the authority of His words and His works, by His miracles of love and judgment, by His unswerving devotion to truth, finally by their belief in His victory over death, they were convinced that He was the Eternal Son of God. So believing, they handed on their faith as an inheritance which the experience of His faithful followers since has made ever more credible."

Never had such a man been seen before. The four gospels which tell the story of His life are written in an atmosphere of wonder, though their language is very simple and severely restrained. It would be well for us to read them again just

as we would read any other book; trying to clear our minds of all preconceptions and reading them as if for the first time. That is the only way the wonderful beauty of it all can really be appreciated.

And evidently Jesus did wonderful things—even if we read with little belief in the miraculous and with a determination to reduce the marvels to a minimum.

Suppose we put aside for a time any discussion of the possibility of miracles, and just read the story of that Life as those who saw it tell the tale. Human suffering never appealed to Him in vain. Multitudes of sick people were brought to Him, or came themselves. They believed that there was a power within Him which leaped out to meet their need. He healed the leper, cured the paralytic, restored the epileptic, gave back sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf; the lame walked, the dumb spake; but what He considered the really significant thing was that the poor heard the “good news” preached to them.

He did not call these things miracles. They were “signs”: outward evidence of the inward power. That is what His near disciples felt. They said that they “beheld His glory” and that it was the very glory of God. Once they had thought of the divine only as far away.

Now, in some mysterious way, they came to feel "the infinite nearness of God" in the love and labors of Jesus.

Some wonderful things are told that are harder to accept than the accounts of the miracles of healing: how nature's powers seemed subject to Him, how at His word the storm ceased and the troubled sea became calm; how on several occasions the supply of daily food was marvellously multiplied; how once, to meet a sudden need, the water reddened into wine; how finally, He restored not merely health, but life to men: not often, but often enough for people to tell of it with bated breath.

Wherever He went crowds followed Him. They had heard of these things and came to see if they were true. What they saw prepared them to believe what they had heard. He was so good, so kind, so sympathetic, so unselfish; so gentle and yet so bold and fearless. Some loved Him—a few came to love Him more and more. More and more they lost their lives in His; their wills became attuned to His. Love made them ready to believe even more than they had been told.

Then there was something greater than His deeds. These were wonderful enough in their overflowing compassion for weary and tempted humanity; but the really significant thing—the

marvellous thing—was not so much what He did as what He said. Marvellous, because His words were with authority; significant, because what He said made them realize the marvel of all marvels, what He was. He taught of God and heaven and as He spoke He made divine things so real. There were new standards of life to which He led men—and always with winning grace and charm and attractive power. Instead of the dry-as-dust lessons of the rabbis, the religious teachers of the day, He told of God in the simple language of simple, every-day people, usually in short stories, each with its searching moral lesson, always with homely illustrations out of their common life. Suppose you could read the Sermon on the Mount for the first time. You would understand then how its truths would move the hearts of the men to whom its language was new, instead of being, what it is to some of us, so familiar as to seem commonplace.

As He talked, men saw a new vision of heaven. He seemed always to tell them of things He knew at first hand. He never said, I hope, I think, I believe, or even I feel sure. He said, "I speak that I do know, and bear testimony to that which I have seen."

Most of all, there were great claims that He made for Himself. No one could come to God

the Father, He said, but by Him. If they would love God, they must love Him. If they would know God, they need but look at Him. He was the Way, the Truth, the Life. He and the Father were one. God had sent Him that men might have life. If they would not receive Him it meant that they were rejecting God and God's gift. If they persisted in the rejection they would be shutting themselves out from God and were in danger of eternal judgment. He Himself would come again to be their Judge.

So they came to feel that J  sus of Nazareth was a unique Person. Here was one who was very human, very natural, very real and true, yet with wisdom and power from God, making claims that only God could make, and in His life showing all the goodness and purity of God.

For the most remarkable thing of all was, that He had no sense of sin. The better a man is, the deeper is the feeling that he is not all that he ought to be. Careless, thoughtless, heedless people have little sense of sin; if you would see one who is really penitent, look at the man who has thought of God and heaven so often and so deeply, that he realizes how far short of the divine standards he has fallen. Jesus had no such feeling. He challenged men to point out in Himself one spot of sin. He told them

that He was perfectly one with God; He set His life over against the divine model, and dared a comparison which none of the sons of men has ever had courage to face.

By and by, out of the crowd who followed Him, Jesus chose a few to whom He gave a fuller teaching. And there were indeed marvellous truths that they learned: how He had come to establish a Society which should be a witness to His truth through all ages and the instrument for conveying His life to men; how all the world should at length hear His message; how this should be possible because He would be with His followers always; how He was God's own Son, the perfect revelation of the Father's life.

They never could have believed this, had they not found in their own religious history some hints that such a thing could be. For centuries the Jewish people had been blessed by a teaching about God wonderfully clear and plain. Good men in every generation, believing themselves specially inspired by God, had told of a time to come when God should reveal Himself to the world in the person of His Messiah, an Anointed One, who should be His representative on earth. Little by little the picture of this Messiah had been drawn by the prophets, each adding his own touch to the portrait till

at last it was complete. In Jesus the disciples saw the fulfilment of these predictions. It would not be long before they should see in their Master's very failure the explanation of the prophetic words about a "suffering servant" which had puzzled them most of all. His life was to be the key that unlocked the door of all history. He solved for them the riddle of the ages.

It must not be supposed that these men came to believe in the divinity of their Master because of the miracles. Rather, it was because they came to see more and more of His glory, that they accepted the miracles as so natural—from *Him*—and sought no other explanation of the marvels. When at last they believed in His Godhead, their belief came through their experience of His manhood. Unique in character and power, He was discovered by those who knew Him best to be unique by nature also. Nor must it be thought that when He was with them they believed to the full. It was only after He had gone that they began to understand. Then everything fell into place. Things they had not grasped before came to have a new meaning. Stories of His miraculous birth, which had been the secret of a few, now became known to all.

But we have gone ahead too fast. It is hardly

necessary to tell about the end. Gradually a cleavage appeared among the people. Only a few could accept His teaching as it came to make moral demands upon them. Then, too, He was obliged to denounce sin and social injustice, and His words hit home to many who were national leaders. So the fickle crowds began to melt away. One day He asked the chosen few whether they too would leave, and His heart was gladdened when Peter answered, "Nay, Lord. To whom could we go? We could never find a higher revelation than Thine. Thou hast the words of eternal life. We believe and are sure that Thou art the looked-for Messiah. We accept Thee as the Son of the Living God."

Peter did not know all that his own words meant. Soon he was to find out. For among the leaders opposition arose. The men whose sins had been exposed came to hate this Prophet of Nazareth. As His preaching laid bare their dishonesty in its declaration of the demands of social justice they hated Him the more. When finally He denounced their graft and cleansed the Temple of their traffic, they determined that He must be put to death. He saw what the issue of it all would be—saw very clearly from the first—but He never faltered in His courage; He would not swerve a hair's breadth from the course His Father's will had mapped out for

Him. And finally He was put to death—the death He had foretold; the death that came as a martyrdom for His fidelity to truth; the death which was to be the sacrifice for the sin of the world, just because it was the willing offering of a perfect life that had always been lived in absolute obedience to the highest and the best; the death that was at last to reveal men to themselves and make them feel their need of God.

Indeed, that sense of their need of God had been the compelling thing in all their intercourse with Him from the beginning. He had revealed to men the great hunger of their hearts. He had shown them that they would know no peace till they had found their rest in the Father's bosom. He opened their hearts to God as hearts had never been opened before. As rain and sunshine and balmy air fertilize the waiting earth, so He seemed to prepare them. It was easy for God to enter, because Christ had made their souls ready.

And so He died. And then He was found more glorious in death than in life. He came back from the grave. At first they could not believe it to be true, their hearts were so torn with sorrow. But theirs were loving hearts, and in the end love always sees clear. So they came to know that death had no power over Him.

They saw Him again and again, after He was risen.

People have said that they must have been mistaken in their belief about His resurrection. Mistaken? A glance at the tomb, had His body still been there, would have shattered their new-found faith; but no one pointed to the grave, because the grave was empty; no one could take them to His body, though some told an unlikely story to the effect that it had been stolen, while the guard of soldiers slept. No, their faith had sure foundations. They, too, knew now even as He had known. The story as we have been telling it became clear; their witness to it never faltered.

Finally when they had seen their risen Master many times, He vanished. Yet they were certain that He was only hidden behind a cloud, as it were; they knew He had not really gone away. He was with them still, only now they were so sure of His presence that they did not need the physical sight of Him to make them certain.

So, waiting and wondering, brooding over all these things, turning them over often in their hearts, one day the power of God came upon them, and the fire of God kindled within them, and the light of God shined through them, and they knew all, knew beyond all doubt, knew with

a certainty that soon won the world to their belief.

What was it that they knew? They had been taught about God by an object lesson. God had walked this earth of ours and had shown Himself to men. To understand the nature of God through thought or argument, by philosophy or logic, is impossible. What this meant, was that God had made use of human nature as a vehicle through which to reveal His own character and to make clear His mind. So truly is man made in the image of God, that God, so to speak, can be translated into terms of human thought and revealed in human life.

The story means more than that. It means that through this human life God was showing us what He meant men to be, what some day (if not here, hereafter) they shall be. We are God's children and some day we shall be found in His likeness.

And yet more does it mean. A great scientist has said that "at the foot of the cross men have a perennial experience of relief and renovation." How are we ever to be what Christ shows us we were meant to be, unless we are brought closer to God? Somehow, in the death of the Lord Christ we are made at one again with the Father. That is "atonement"—at-one-ment. Book after book has been written in the attempt to explain

the mystery. It is best, perhaps, not to try to understand, but only to seek the "perennial experience."

The real duty of life is to gain that experience and make it our own.

Those first disciples surrendered to Christ. In all His dealings with them, He was making as it were the great suggestion: *You need God*. There is a hunger of the human heart for Him. One by one the disciples felt that heart hunger. One by one they capitulated to Christ; they fell under His spell; they "gave in" to God. Have *we* surrendered? Is anything keeping us back from this giving in to God? Any love of possessions? Any selfishness of life? Any unwillingness to make sacrifices? Any carelessness and indifference? We shall never find rest until we rest in Him. Why put other things in His place? Why rob the soul of lasting peace?

Those early disciples made Christ their Master. Is he *ours*? Have we definitely declared for Him against the world? Are we seeking to make *our* world *His* world?

This is the Old, Old Story: the Old Gospel. What does it mean to us? Once it has taken hold of our hearts, and the hearts of others like us, it will renew its work of changing the world. Then shall the Old Gospel become the New: a Gospel for public life as well as private;

for cities as well as citizens; for nations as well as men. A Gospel of the Kingdom; the Kingdom of social righteousness for which Christ lived; the ideal of social justice for which He died.

That it will never be till it has gripped and held individual hearts. Has it gripped ours?

II

FABLE AND FACT

THERE is a pretty fairy tale about a little prince and the birds in his garden. He was a kind little prince, and he loved to hear the birds sing and to watch them fly among the trees and flowers in the wonderful park on which the palace windows opened. One morning there came a sudden cold snap, and when he looked out of the window some of the birds were dead. He was very sorry and he wanted to warn the others of the colder days that were coming; so he ran down into the garden to tell them of their peril.

The little prince was a beautiful boy, and he was a sight to gladden the eyes as he rushed in among the flowers, in his dress of velvet and lace, with his curls flying and his eyes bright with kindness. But his sudden entrance frightened the birds and they flew away.

Then he knew that he must first win their confidence. So he began to throw them crumbs and to sing to them softly, till before long the birds would fly to his shoulder, and light on his hand

to get the food he brought. Now it was time to tell them all he wanted to say; when suddenly the prince remembered that he did not know the language of the birds and they could not understand his speech.

He was very sad about it, and that night he cried himself to sleep; for the days would soon be days of steady cold, and the birds did not have sense enough to seek shelter or fly away to a warmer land. In the night his fairy godmother came to him. She touched him with her wand while he slept, and when he awoke the next morning, lo! he had changed into the form of a bird. Down he flew into the garden, and in the language of the birds he told them all he had tried to say the day before. All that he knew as a prince he could translate into their speech. When they were slow to understand, he showed them, as well as told them, what they must do. And then, when his task was done, the fairy godmother touched him again with her wand, and he became a prince once more and went back to his own beautiful apartments in the royal palace.

Fairy tales have little interest for the wise people of to-day. It doesn't take long for the smallest child to refuse them belief. The older children scoff at them. Grown people haven't enough poetry in their souls to remember that

they ever liked them. Some Peter Pan asks us, "You *do* believe in the fairies, don't you?" And because Peter Pan is so winning about it and so anxious, we cry out that we do; but of course we do not. Only, after we have said it, somehow we wish we did believe.

Well, the story of the Prince and His Birds is typical of a story we *can* believe.

For long ago God looked down upon this world of His. He saw how the beautiful life that He had made had gone wrong; He saw His human children falling into sin; He saw them in peril of eternal loss.

What was He to do about it? Had the heavens opened for God to be seen in all His glory, men would have been blinded by the vision, too frightened to know what it meant. We have seen men in the presence of physical marvels too stunned to think. What would the unveiled splendor of Deity be for them?

Or God might have written His laws and counsels in letters of flaming gold across the evening sky. Who could have read the message? Who knows but that it *is* written for us to read in some of the beauties of nature, if we could but understand God's speech?

Of course we do not believe in fairies and their magical power. But we do want to believe in God, and if we believe in Him we know there

is nothing beyond His power. Is it too much that we should be asked to believe that God sent His Son into the world, to take our nature upon Him, to live our life, to put into our speech His divine knowledge, and to tell men and show them how God wants them to live?

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did just that. Still remaining what He was before in the glory of His Divine Personality, He laid aside the garments of divinity and became man, as human as ourselves in everything that is of the essence of human nature. He was perfectly man, with a human body, a reasonable soul, a mind with memory and understanding, a heart with every true human affection. As man He entered completely into our life. He showed us what that life ought to be, showed us as in no other way we could have learned. He saw man mistaking the meaning of life, living for pleasure or sin; and He said, I, the Son of God, will enter into man's nature; with My divine mind I see his faults and the remedy; through the nature with which I clothe Myself I will be able to show him the sin and the cure. He will know what he ought to be, because he will have My life as the model he is to copy.

And all the while He was showing us also what God is. When an infant is born, a new person comes into the world; but when Jesus Christ

was born, no new person entered into life; it was the same divine Person who had lived from all eternity with the Father, and now took to Himself another nature. Therefore Jesus Christ shows us what God is, as well as what man ought to be. He is translating, as it were, God's life into human life, God's speech into human language. No man has seen God at any time, says St. John; the Only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, came and made Him known.

It seems too good to be true. In reality it is too great and splendid not to be true. There is a poem of Browning, a letter of Karshish, the Arab physician, in which he tells of meeting Lazarus of Bethany and of the latter's belief that the One who raised him from the grave Himself was God. Karshish dismisses the tale with amused mockery; yet somehow the idea will not down, soon he speaks of it again—and now it is an interesting delusion, unbelievable, of course, but worth repeating. Then, the letter ended, he comes back again to the tale, in a postscript; he plays about the thought with a strange fascination; he cannot dismiss it from his mind. Suppose it were true!

So it always is. One cannot dismiss the idea of the Incarnation. It grips the imagination. Impossible? But how could it ever have been

invented? Too good to be true? No; too splendid not to be true. "The very God! think, Ahib;" Karshish writes, "so the All-Great were the All-Loving too."

If there were time, it would help us to go over the road by which the apostles came to understand this truth. They did not accept the divinity of Jesus Christ in mere credulous craving for marvels. Rather, they saw that nothing less than that could explain all they had seen and heard as they walked and talked with Jesus their Master.

Notice some of the things Jesus claimed for Himself:

He claimed to be perfectly sinless.

He said that He was from above while men are from beneath.

He said that He was the way, the truth, the life, the Good Shepherd of souls, the light of the world.

He told His followers that no man could come to God but by Him.

He said that to honor Him was to honor God; that if we would believe in God we must believe also in Him.

When Philip expressed a longing to see God, He said: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

He claimed equality with God, essential unity with Him: He and the Father were one.

He declared that no rival claim, however strong, no natural affection, however deep, must be allowed to interpose between Him and His follower. No one must love father or mother, wife or child, more than Him.

He announced that He would come back again to judge the world, because the Father had committed all judgment to Him. To judge men is to claim perfect knowledge of them, so as to know their past and present, their inherited traits, their peculiar temptations, their inner motives, their spiritual struggles; their true self, as only God can know it.

Sometimes people say that it is enough to believe in Christ as a good man. They forget that one who could make such claims as Christ made is either all that He said of Himself or else He is not a good man. He is a fanatical impostor, or a self-deceived lunatic; or—He is what He said He was. Our Lord's human perfection would fade before our eyes were we to think of it apart from His divinity. He is perfect as man only because He is truly God, as He claimed to be.

Well, that is what the disciples finally came to see. They were not let at once into the secret of Jesus Christ's divinity. *They lived with*

Him. Day by day they grew to be on more intimate terms with Him. And as they looked they saw that a wonderful secret lay underneath the life upon which they gazed. It was a glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father. They came at last to know what it meant. They had seen and heard and handled the Word of Life. They had walked and talked with God.

So God showed men what He is; showed them, in the only way they could have seen.

It is good, in these days, to know what He really is. These are times that try men's souls. A world at war has made us conscious of many deeds of darkness in the past still unpunished. Blood-stained Europe has made more vivid the unrestrained brutality of past generations. For years, too, we have been growing into a deeper consciousness of the problem of evil. A world with social sins almost unhindered and industrial injustice so often triumphant hardly looks like God's world. Sin and suffering and sorrow and death are seen now in sharper outline than ever before. Every one of us, sooner or later, faces each of these problems in a personal way; they come home to us individually, though our sympathies have not been keen enough to feel them in general.

Is it any wonder that sometimes men ask whether a world like this can be God's handi-

work? What kind of a God is it whose universe is seamed and scarred with sin and sorrow?

It is not sinful doubt to question. Who that thinks can face these problems with an untroubled heart? We are jealous for the honor of God. We want a God of love, or we will not believe in God at all.

There are arguments with which we might answer such doubts. God's world is what man has made it. And men are what they are because God could not make us good and keep us good. He gave us *moral freedom*, and that means freedom to choose and the possibility of going wrong. If God had made us any other way our goodness could never have been moral goodness, however perfect our lives; it would have been merely the goodness of a well-made machine.

So we could argue. But argument is an insult to a heart that aches. We want more than arguments. And, thank God, we have more in the story of Jesus Christ. If He is indeed the Eternal Son of God, there can be no question about the love of God. There always will be things in the world that seem to contradict that love, and we shall never understand the mystery of evil; but whether we understand or not, we can believe.

Among many thoughtful books about the great war, none has put with such vividness as

does H. G. Wells's novel, "Mr. Britling Sees It Through," the spiritual problems arising out of war's appalling horror and the tangled confusion of thought in which men find themselves when obliged to face its pain and sorrow. A more religious man than Mr. Britling might have seen clearly without the poignancy of his own grief to give the vision; a man of merely conventional belief might have made utter shipwreck of his faith; one less confident of his own mental processes would not have felt so keenly the anguish of the struggle. For a man like him, however, it meant the pain of readjustment, his social theories shattered, his confident assumptions upset, his whole world become a chaos. Then when the tragedy touched his own life, the sorrow meant faith found instead of faith lost, a new birth of his soul and a new understanding of the divine. God is made known to him through the love he bears his son. "If we had no other light but the love we have between us, it would still be certain that there is a God of love and righteousness." It is not a complete faith yet. Mr. Britling cannot believe in God as he thinks the creeds declare Him; in his blind struggle towards the light, he thinks of God as a "finite God." "How can He be anything that matters to man, unless He is limited and defined and human like ourselves?"

Surely, were the story of Jesus Christ better understood, it would be seen how this human craving for a human God has its answer in the Gospel. Not a finite God—that would be a contradiction in terms—but a God who struggles; who is *willing* to struggle, if only so men may be left in moral freedom; a God who cares, sympathizes, agonizes. Long ago Browning, in another wonderful poem, made David tell Saul of a God like that:

'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my
flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it! O Saul, it
shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like
to me
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand
like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See
the Christ stand.

For those who have thought long and deeply of the meaning of Christianity, this has been the real message of the life of Christ. He is the assurance the God does enter into the tragedy of human life and that He understands it. He is not a God of lonely majesty and self-sufficiency. Once He came visibly among men, to tell them what He really is, and those who have

read aright the story of His coming have light on life's dark mysteries—mysteries that will never cease to be full of clouds and darkness, though they show a silver lining to the eyes of patient faith. It is well that we should make clear to our own minds this essential meaning of the Gospel story; and it is necessary to make it just as clear that unless the traditional understanding of it be correct, the real message of Christ is gone. If the Gospel be only an "interpretation" of God and human life, though given by the Best Man the world has ever known, we have no certain revelation. In that case, the Gospel becomes merely the story of one more good man—a surpassingly good man—struggling and failing; deserted by God at the last. It is one man's thought about God—better than most men's thoughts, but no sure disclosure. It is only when we accept Christ as what the Christian Church has always proclaimed Him—very God of very God—that the truth of the story holds. Then, and only then, can we feel sure of the God of love; for then we have, not simply wonderful thoughts about God, but a picture, painted in human colors, to show us what, essentially, He is.

What Christ was, God is. What Christ did, God does. What Christ said, God says. What Christ felt, God feels. Can there be any doubt

about Christ's love? If He were only a good man, that would prove nothing. But if He is God's Son, then we have light on life's dark mysteries. We know that God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, once walked this earth. Does God care for men? See Him, in the Person of His dear Son, hanging on the cross. Does God love? He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

That is not argument; it is fact. The statement of it is not dogma; it is life.

So the Christian believer walks through the world with peace in his heart. He has learned the secret of all secrets, that God is love. Whatever seems to contradict it, He knows it to be true; for he has looked into the face of Jesus Christ, and he remembers his Lord's words, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

There is the great fact for him: the fact which the Bible makes clear beyond all question, not by naming the doctrine, but by telling the story of the Lord who came down from heaven that men might live.

III

THE GOOD PHYSICIAN

JESUS CHRIST was the Good Physician. Even those who stumble at the other miracles of the Bible, believe in the Gospel stories of Christ's healing power, however they explain the facts. The records of His gracious deeds run so closely through the narrative that they are like threads woven into the cloth which cannot be cut out without destroying the garment.

The picture is plain. Jesus Christ went about through the fields and hills of Galilee restoring into harmony with the beautiful world about Him the disease-laden bodies of the multitudes of sick folk who came to Him for help. To most of those who came to see Him He was known first as the Healer.

The Good Physician had a company of pupils who watched Him at His work. He was like a surgeon in a clinic, with the eyes of his students fixed upon him. Everywhere the little company of His disciples went with Him on His errands of mercy. Because of their presence He seemed to hold Himself in. He did only what an over-

flowing pity compelled Him to do; and He did it in such a way as to teach while He worked. He wanted to instruct that little band of followers and make them understand His method and see its significance.

As the tide of patients swept in upon Him the disciples noticed a strange thing about the Master's work of healing. They had come to believe that all power was given Him, and yet He exercised that power only within limitations. They had come to believe that He could heal by a word; yet with the crowds pressing Him He chose a slower, plodding way.

For the multitudes did indeed besiege Him from every side. The demands upon His skill spread like a conflagration. Half the countryside flung themselves upon His vitality and sympathy. His patients were of all classes, all disorders, all shades of faith, all varieties of gratitude and ingratitude. They crowded around Him till He hardly had time to eat or to sleep. So they came and so they were healed.

What, then, was the remarkable thing that the Twelve Disciples learned as they watched the Divine Healer? This first: That instead of healing them all by a word, instead of *willing* cures by the wholesale, He took His patients one by one. And then, second—and we need to fix our attention upon it—that as each in-

dividual came to Him for treatment, He always made use of material things in effecting His cures.

Remember that the apostles believed in His power to heal; believed that He might have healed all who came by the simple exercise of that power, without any assistance from without. What must have been their thoughts when they saw how He chose to work? Some material object seemed always to be the medium through which the healing was effected. Now it is the common clay; now the water of Siloam; now His own body; His hands; the saliva from His lips; even His garments.

There was a man born deaf and with an impediment in His speech; Jesus took him aside from the multitude, put His fingers in the man's ears, touched his tongue. A blind man came to Him: He spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle, anointed his eyes and sent him to the pool to wash.

Out of all the recorded miracles of healing there are only five which were not accompanied by the use of some material object or physical agency; and in each of these cases there is a special reason for the variation from His customary method. Usually, ordinarily, He used material helps; and of the numerous other miraculous cures of which there is no detailed record, it is

said that "He laid His hands upon them and healed them every one."

Now mark. He did this in spite of the apparent peril of arousing among the people a dangerous superstition. We know how easy it is for ignorant people to attribute a cure to some special object. Pilgrimages to the shrines of saints are not unknown to-day, and many cures have been attributed to the virtue of holy relics.

There was always that danger when Jesus the Good Physician wrought His cures: the danger that instead of attention being fixed upon Himself alone, it might be fixed upon the things He used, and the cure be attributed to some healing quality of the particular clay or water; it might be supposed that there was virtue in the touch of His garment; men's minds might be directed away from the Healer; they might forget Him and remember only the material He employed.

Why, then, did He persist in His method? Must not the apostles have asked that question again and again? What did He mean? There they were, students in the clinic, watching the Master at His work, feeling that He wanted their attention, and that He had some purpose in arousing their questioning. Why did He do it that way?

We can think of but one answer. His purpose was to accustom the disciples to the use of material things in the conveying of physical

gifts of healing, till at length they could grasp the thought that in the same way He meant to make use of material things in the conveying of spiritual gifts. In other words, He was preparing them for a great principle of the Christian religion, viz., *the sacramental principle*, that grace is conveyed to the soul "through channels." The things of earth are used to bring to men the gifts of heaven. Through things visible we are brought to an appreciation of things invisible.

So as they question in their hearts, He speaks to them by and by of baptism; He tells Nicodemus that one must be born again of *water* and the Spirit; at the close of His ministry He sends out His disciples to administer baptismal grace in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Again He tells them that their life must be fed from Him; that except they eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, they have no life in them; and when there has been time for the thought to sink into their minds He takes bread and wine, blesses it, and tells them that this is the Body and Blood of which He had spoken. When the day comes that He ordains them to send them forth as the Father had sent Him, He lays His hands upon them and breathes on them, that in the very act their faith may be stimulated to believe in the fact of the inflowing grace.

Here then we have the source of the sacramental system: Christ Himself. He it is, and no one else, who ordains that spiritual grace shall come through material channels: the water of baptism a laver of inward spiritual purification; the bread and wine of Holy Communion the mystical means of imparting the life of Christ; the laying on of hands as the appointed method of the coming of the Spirit of strength and comfort; all outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace given us.

Sometimes men have objected to the Church's insistence on the sacraments as though sacraments were substitutes for individual devotion to Jesus Christ, ceremonies and forms that smother personal piety, something to bring the Church and the clergy between the soul and God and hindering union with Christ. Of course it is not in this way that the Church preaches the sacramental principle. Church doctrine, after all, is Bible truth. Sacraments are really Christ's appointed means of union with Himself; blessed channels of grace by which love may be fed and union with God made perfect and devotion to Him kept alive. "Back to Christ," we hear men say; back of churches and creeds and sacraments to Jesus Himself. But when we go back to Christ we find ourselves in the very atmosphere of Church teaching. He and He alone is authority

for our doctrine. Call the sacramental system absurd, if you will; but remember it originated with the Lord Christ Himself. Whether you understand the need of it or not, it is His method; and when you object to it your objection is not against the Church's plan, it is against Christ's own scheme of salvation.

But why did Jesus Christ establish such a system? Why does He not always give life to the soul without such helps?

We may suggest three reasons.

First. Because it is the simplest way to bring us to a realization of spiritual things. For *our* sakes grace is brought to us through external channels. We are not disembodied spirits; we are here in the body, with all the drawbacks of a bodily existence. Glimpses of heaven open to us, and then we fall back to earth; the soaring spirit is held down by the flesh. So by Christ's sacramental method, faith is stimulated by sense. As in the miracles of healing the touch of the hand, the finger on the tongue, the clay on the eyes, the water of the pool, aroused the faith of those who were to be healed, made them ready and expectant, helped them to feel that something was being done for them—so now, there is something we can see, touch, taste, handle, that faith may be quickened. The outward symbol is a pledge to assure us

of grace given, as well as a means to its reception.

And not only an aid to faith, but a test of faith. It is enough for us that Christ has given the command; the faithful follower obeys, whether he understands or not. It is to be expected that one who submits loyally and obediently to a command or expressed wish of Christ should receive a blessing. "If a man opens his heart wide in loving response to the wish of another, that person's spirit inevitably enters. We see this sacramental act of receiving the spirit of another in every child who obeys, from a glad love, his father or his mother, in every student who tries hard to fulfil his great master's will for him; in every friend who from love tries to please his friend." Our Lord asks us to seek grace this way. It is a love test and faith test—and we obey.

Second. We are souls in bodies, because the body is the expression of the soul's life. We shall *always* be souls in bodies; in the life of the world to come the soul will have that through which its life is expressed. Therefore the redemption of the soul will be the redemption of the body as well; and it is fitting that the gift to the soul should come through physical channels, so that every part of our nature may share in the bestowal of grace.

Third. Perhaps there is still a deeper pur-

pose. May it not be that all creation is to share in the plan of redemption? St. Paul seems to suggest that the fall of man involved the whole created universe, which "groaneth and travaileth in pain," waiting for its redemption and ours. So nature, itself to be redeemed, is made use of in God's redemptive work, as the Holy Spirit, through natural elements exalted to a spiritual efficacy, ministers to the diseases of the soul.

Who can tell how far this thought may carry us? Does it mean that this world, purified and become a scene of unfettered spiritual activity, shall be the new heaven and the new earth of the seer's vision? Does it mean that we have lost something of the romance and poetry of redemption when we forget the mystery of nature in our effort to exalt the mystery of grace? Does it mean that in going back to Christ we have found the source of mystery in each?

It is He who gives nature its beauty and its charm. Back of all that we see is God the Unseen; God and His spiritual hosts. Every pleasing prospect is, as it were, the expression of His presence, the moving of the robes of those whose faces see God.

And back of the sacramental water and the sacramental bread and wine is the same Christ. He charges them with power. He fills them with

grace. In Him is the current of life for which they are the conveyors. So we pass from symbols to the thing symbolized, from the outward form to the inward reality; and we walk, trembling yet joyous, in the very presence of God.

Perhaps it may be only a fancy; but it is a beautiful fancy, this thought of the basis of the sacramental system. A poet-priest has expressed it more beautifully than any words of ours can put it. He tells how, one Saturday afternoon in midsummer, he stood on the shore of Otsego Lake, looking on "a scene which for quiet and soothing beauty can hardly be surpassed. Before him lay the mirror of the Glimmerglass; warm lights threw a flush upon the skies; the day was going away; the omens of evening were already in the clouds; the woods were reflected in their native colors along the silent shore. But below was more than what met the eye. Through and under this exterior beauty voices could be heard, speaking of the mystery of the natural world. It has been said of the study of nature that it is hardly profane to characterize it as a means of grace. Here are depths which no man has yet sounded. Whence, and how, came this wondrous, beautiful world; by what bond and to what extent is it so related to man as to sympathize with him in his sorrows and partake of his hope—what poet, what philosopher,

what theologian has told us the whole truth on these points?"

On the following morning the visitor found himself at an early Eucharistic celebration in the church on the lake. Here another mystery confronted him, like the other too deep to search out; the mystery of the coming of our Lord in Holy Communion.

Both mysteries are of God; one in the order of nature, the other in the order of grace. This lover of nature was a lover of God and as he thought of both he reverently asked many questions. May not the mystery in nature pass onward and upward to the mystery in grace? May there not be relationships between them more intimate than we suppose, too subtle for us to comprehend? And may not this be the true explanation of the sacramental system? May not the mystery in grace be more deeply felt when interpreted by the mystery in nature? At any rate it is the same Hand which beckons to us in both, and in both is stretched out to comfort and to bless.

IV

OUR LORD'S LAST REQUEST

YOUR mother is dying. You sit by her bedside, her hand in yours. She looks up into your face. There are many things you both want to say; but you can neither of you bear them now. At length she does speak, in low, trembling tone, of things which must be said. She tells you what she wants you to do for her in the few days that are left. And then, with a smile that lights up her face, she speaks of some other thing she wants done afterward. "You will do it, dear," she asks; "do it for me? And you won't forget me, will you? Do it always, to remember me."

What kind of a son would you be if you forgot?

The Lord Jesus Christ, the world's best Friend, gathered His followers about Him on the night before He died. He was divine; but he was very human. And He had all this human longing not to be forgotten. Purged, of course, of all self-seeking—He would be remembered, not for His sake only, but for ours.

He and His friends had met for a very sacred and solemn purpose. They had kept together the Passover Supper, the great religious feast of their race. When it was over He took bread and wine—the paschal bread of the feast and the wine mingled with water. He raised His hands in blessing; He broke the bread and poured out the wine; He told them that His own Body would be broken and His blood shed for them. And then He said: Do this always in remembrance of Me.

What kind of Christians are we if we forget?

So: Think of Jesus Christ as He institutes this rite of remembrance. “His low voice falters a little as He says, This is My Body, broken. The wine runs deep red in the light of the paschal lamps as He says, This is My Blood, shed—for you. With bowed heads and streaming cheeks, with shrinking lips and hearts stilled, they ate and drank. What did He see? The cruciform oak; the nails; the point of the spear; the gush of blood from the heart. Yet what did He see? Far down the years quiet groups in silent churches, kneeling with bowed heads; the dull white of broken bread; the gleam of red wine; the pure tint of silver; prayer and sacred song; hushed hearts melting into tenderness. What did He see? Millions offering what those of that generation had refused. Acceptance of what

His own race and His own day had declined to receive. The love and homage of grateful hearts."

Are we among those whom He saw? If not, why? Shall anything keep us longer from offering the simple thing that He asked?

So we think of the Holy Communion first as a devout act of remembrance. If you cannot believe any more than that about it you should come. But it *is* more than that. In some way it has always been felt that in this service Jesus Christ touches us, and we receive His very life.

Let us think a moment about ourselves. "You cannot see me; I cannot see you. All that you see of me—this hand; this face—is not myself; it is the garment my spirit wears. What you see is only carbon, phosphorus, lime, and water and a little sodium chloride mixed." But God breathed upon this material body and it became a living soul. That soul is my real self, though you cannot see it.

The mother's kiss: it is only a little dust of her lips touching the dust of your forehead. Is it? Or is it the blending of her soul with yours in the power of love? The mother's tears: they are only a little water and a pinch of salt. Or are they more?

And Jesus Christ said wonderful things about

this sacrament of His love. He said: "This is My Body; this is My Blood."

It will be objected that He was speaking figuratively. Of course He was—in a sense. But what do we mean by figurative language, unless it be that our figures of speech are an effort to express a bigger truth than we can put into humdrum prose? The very need of figurative language shows that the idea to which we are trying to give utterance calls for a heavier burden of meaning than ordinary words can bear. To say that words are figurative is not to empty them of meaning. It is to say that the wider conception must be at least as great as the figure itself.

Let us be frank to admit, therefore, that these words of Christ are figurative. What then? Why this: that the inner reality which needs such a figure to express it must be great beyond all thought. We are not making the Holy Eucharist less mysterious, then, if we call the language that describes it a figurative language; we have but deepened the mystery.

That is the next thing we must feel then about the Holy Communion. It is not merely an act of remembrance; it is Christ's way of giving us His life. He Himself is present when we do what He commanded. The food we take is not material food only; it is His very life.

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?” So St. Paul puts the question, and those who accept our Lord’s words on their face value can give but one answer.

We could hardly stay away from Holy Communion if we thought that out. There are some who are kept back by a false sense of reverence: “I am not worthy.” But if Christ is really here, to stay away from His sacramental presence is staying away from Christ Himself. St. Peter, when he had the vision of the Risen Master, felt his own unworthiness. “Depart from me, Lord,” he cried; “for I am a sinful man.” The Lord Christ did not depart, though; and Peter must ever have been grateful that his request was not granted.

Nor could we come carelessly if we believed Christ’s words. That is not the way to come into the very presence of the Lord: without preparation, without previous thought, without special prayer; with no sense of sin, with no firm purpose of amendment, with no earnest thought of duty. Every communion should be a solemn thing, undertaken with as reverent a preparation as we should make were we told that to-morrow we were to see Christ face to face.

One thing surely will be a part of your preparation. Your Lord is coming to pardon and cleanse you from sin: well, then, you need to know what your sin is, so that you may confess it fully as you ask His absolution. The trouble with most people is, that they are ready enough to confess in general that they are sinful, but they do not know what their particular sins are. They always spell Sin with a capital letter. It is only a vague feeling of unworthiness. Such general confessions are unreal and ineffective. We need to examine our lives, to put down each special sin, however small and unimportant it may seem to be, and confess each, one by one; one by one to ask pardon for our offences; one by one make resolutions of amendment. We must come to Christ, not with a vague acknowledgment of Sinfulness, but with humble confession of particular faults and shortcomings. Not Sin, but sins.

If you do not know just how to make your preparation, it is easy to get a book of devotion that will help you, with prayers you can make your own; but, after all, the best preparation for communion is a life of service so unselfish and exacting that it demands God in order to live it. The man who works hard through the day comes home hungry for his evening meal; and the Christian who works hard for Christ will be hungry for his spiritual food.

When Our Lord said, "Do this in remembrance of Me," it is significant in what He chose to be remembered. He was famous for His teaching, and yet more notable for His wondrous works. Yet He chose neither. He would be remembered in His death. That was because His death was no ordinary martyrdom. He gave His life a ransom for many. His death was a propitiatory sacrifice for the sin of the world. Into a world of sin divine forgiveness came freely, but it came by divine Love itself bearing, before our eyes, our sins or their results. In the death of Christ, and in nothing else, we see the awfulness of sin, and are brought to acknowledge the penalty that is its due. There, and nowhere else, the pain and the shame of sin are awakened. In the supreme moment of forgiveness, we find that forgiveness is made possible because at last we have seen sin with the eye of God.

It was this that the Lord would bring constantly to our remembrance; and so He said, "Do this."

The words, however, have a meaning deeper than our first thought would suggest. They are sacrificial words. Perhaps they would best be translated, "Offer this for My memorial." And so the Holy Communion is not simply an act of remembrance, nor even the means of

approach to the divine presence; it is a sacrificial service.

The sacrifice of the cross, while it was one, perfect and sufficient, did not end on Good Friday. He who was priest and victim passed into the heavens, and there perpetually presents on our behalf the life which He once for all laid down, and has taken once more, and never now needs to lay down again forever.

That same offering which He pleads in heaven is pleaded by His priests as they offer the Eucharist on earth. He instituted and ordained this holy mystery as a pledge of His love and for a continual memorial of His death. At every communion we set forth His death, we lift it up on high, we magnify it as our only boast, our chief glory, our one hope. And in so doing the veil between heaven and earth is lifted, and we find ourselves one with Him in that ceaseless presentation of Himself for us in the inexhaustible virtue of His past suffering.

Not till we have grown into some appreciation of this side of the Holy Communion shall we ever know what public worship really is. We go to church, not merely to hear sermons, nor simply for united common prayer, but to plead in the sacrament of the altar the one great sacrifice for the world's sin, and our own. Sometimes I do not wonder that churchgoing has declined

among us. People can read sermons at home—though, of course they do not. If they did, they could read better ones than they are likely to hear in church. Beautiful as the prayer book offices are, they too can be read at home—though they are not, very often. But the one thing we can *not* do, in deed as well as in word, the one thing that we ought to come to church that we *may* do, is to plead the Lord's death till He come. When we can have the Holy Communion restored to its rightful place as the Lord's own service for the Lord's own day; when our people can be taught to centre their devotion about it; when to offer it shall be the main object of church going, and those who love it shall learn to love it enough to make the service of sacrifice their principal thought, instead of fixing their attention too much on the ceremonial with which it is offered—then will our churches once more be filled with devout worshippers.

In "A Spiritual Pilgrimage," the Rev. R. J. Campbell tells, with frank sincerity and a singular self-forgetfulness that lays bare the life of a soul, the story of his return to the Anglican communion after years of fruitful service as pastor of the great City Temple, London. To him sacraments were not obstacles between God and the soul; rather, they were helps to a realization of the divine. The absence of sacraments

tended to banish the consciousness of the supernatural; the sacramental presence was an aid to the constant remembrance of the ever-present Christ. That was how he accounted for the peculiar type of saintliness which the Church develops—a sweet, calm, lowly confidence, with a touch of awe in it. Protestantism brings people to their feet; Catholicism does something better, it brings them to their knees. Sacramental worship has warmth and fervor.

We have made public worship too cold and formal, too bare and barren, something that appeals in the main to the trained and cultured intellect. Here we have that which makes it appeal to the heart and stir the emotions. "Why is it that your church is always crowded?" The question was asked of a devout peasant, somewhere in France, before the war, when religion meant much, though not as much as it has come to mean since. The questioner had in his mind many objections to a religion that seemed to him full of childish superstition and ignorant submission to priestly authority. He was silenced by the answer that came, after a moment's thought, "Because we believe in the Presence. If you knew that you could meet Jesus Christ in this room, would you not crawl here on your hands and knees, if need be, that you might find Him?" With the picture in his mind of a

stolid English village congregation at matins, with the thought of America's indifferent millions in the once religious rural places, is it any wonder that objections could not let loose his tongue and his argumentative lips were sealed?

THE ROMANCE OF CHRIST'S
RELIGION

V

THE DIVINE COMPANION

IN what someone has called one of the most pathetic passages in modern literature, Prof. Clifford speaks of a lost faith: "We have seen the sun shine out of an empty heaven, to light up a soulless earth. We have felt with utter loneliness that the Great Companion is dead."

In other words, for him and many others like him, God is not a personal God; they no longer believe that He can be known. Their loss of faith is a tragedy. It means that prayer is useless save as a subjective experience; divine fellowship and communion impossible; divine guidance an unreality. They are not blatant unbelievers glorying in a supposed intellectual superiority. They would believe if they could. They would give anything in the world to get back their old faith. Without it, they find no help or comfort in life's strain and stress and struggle.

Theirs is indeed a tragedy, but there are sadder tragedies than this. What about those who have lost the Divine Companionship and give them-

selves little concern about it, whose faith in God is gone and they do not know it?

Most of us are practical people who do not trouble ourselves about philosophical doubt; yet if we knew enough about it to express ourselves in Herbert Spencer's language, should we be satisfied just to say that God is an Infinite and Eternal Energy out of which all things proceed? We are not philosophical agnostics; but may it not be that many of us are practical agnostics, not quite sure whether God is *He* or *It*? When we think of God, are we only like children, with a vague fear of the darkness or the thunder? Is our feeling merely one of momentary awe at the remembrance of a Great Unknown? To be quite certain of God; to believe in Him as One who speaks to us and with Whom we may speak; to have conscious, felt, sustained relationship with Him—it would be a searching question to ask for how many people that is a fact of sure experience.

Yet to believe in God as the Great Companion; to know Him as a personal Friend; to have fellowship, intercourse, communion with Him—this is the very heart and soul of religion; without it we have no real belief at all.

That sort of knowledge of God as a sure and certain faith is the great offer of the Gospel. Personal friendship with Him through Jesus

Christ—it was for this that Christ came; it is the splendid gift He holds out for all who will receive it. “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” “Ye are My friends.”

Why do we not appreciate it? Men do value the friendship of the good and the great. There is nothing finer we could wish for than to be an intimate friend of one of the world’s great men, with all our inferiority to know nevertheless that we have his thought and esteem and affection, to be one of those to whom he writes letters and pays visits—of course we would thrill at such a prospect. Why do we not think more, then, of the personal knowledge of God and of personal friendship with Jesus Christ? Why is the offer of friendship with the Greatest and the Best unappreciated?

Probably because, after all, it does not seem real and tangible. It is something purely imaginary and visionary; mystical and forced. We think of Jesus Christ as an historical character who has passed away and can no longer be seen and heard. When we do think of God in any way as a Person we think of Him as a distant Person. To make Him one who shares our life more really than any one else, who enters more intimately into our thought than does any other

person, whose friendship counts for more than other friendships—if that is what the personal knowledge of God means, how many of us must confess with a sigh that we hardly dream of its possibility.

Practically—whatever our theoretical belief may be—practically, is it not true of even many a supposed Christian that for him the Great Companion is dead?

How are we to bring Him to life again?

It helps a little bit to know that there have always been men to whom this experience was an actuality beyond question.

That is the way the disciples knew Christ: Peter and James and John; Mary and Martha and Lazarus. The very phrase that expresses the deepest intimacy of personal affection, “a bosom friend,” sprang out of the fact that one of the apostles “lay on His breast at supper.” And if you say, “Of course, they saw Christ in the flesh”—well, St. Paul knew Him in just the same way, and there is no evidence that St. Paul ever saw Christ.

Other men since have had just the same experience. Every age has had its great Friends of God—men and women who have been sure of Him, who knew how to speak to Him and were certain that He answered, who had no more doubt of Him than had John himself, who felt as surely

as did Moses that they had seen Him face to face. And these Friends of God have always been men and women of power, whether their sphere of life was wide or limited. They have had the ability to pass over their experience to others. The measure of a man's power is the depth of his life, and these have given an indefinable impression of depth; they have showed a strength and seriousness of conviction that has made it hard to believe that there was not an actual experience back of their earnestness which was their real instrument of persuasion. They were sure that they had found God, and their lives went far to prove the truth of that of which they were persuaded.

How, then, shall the same experience be ours? How shall we find God?

First, it must mean real effort. It demands a certain degree of detachment, an earnestness of desire "intense enough to counterbalance the multitude of other desires that conflict with it." Human friendship—real human friendship—demands that. It is no easy thing to know a friend. How many people do you really know? Most of the people about us we know only in a casual and abstract way, in one or more of their characteristics. We know their appearance, their social habits, their political opinions, their business abilities, their educational attainments, their

personal mannerisms, their likes and dislikes. "Only now and then, under the pressure of respect and reverence, of admiration or love, do we press through these partial manifestations to the character behind them." To know a man as he is—his real motives, the secret springs of his conduct, the measure of his abilities, the explanation of his inconsistencies, the nature of his deepest feelings, the dominant principle of his inner life—that is often a work of years. It comes only with intensity of desire, concentration, intercourse, constant association; most of all, through kinship of thought and feeling.

For friendship, to be strong and lasting, requires a certain moral likeness. A man can never understand a character with which his own has no accord. It is for this reason that friendship makes such demands upon us. It is jarred by the slightest indifference or selfishness. It requires, in measure, a sacrifice. It involves some sinking of self.

Must it not be so with God? To know Him must also demand real effort, earnest longing, moral affinity.

What has just been said is hardly more than a brief summary of a chapter in a great book on Divine Personality by a learned theologian. The thought is put more vividly and practically by an English preacher. He imagines himself

arguing about religion with a group of young men who do not believe; and he turns to one of them who has just been married and asks him how he won his wife. The answer shows how he met her at a house party; how then he planned to get invitations to other places where he could see her again; how he took any amount of trouble to meet her as often as possible; how he even went to garden parties and afternoon teas—which every normal man hates—hoping that she would be there; how family opposition was broken down; how he worked hard and made his way, that he might offer her a fair position; and how in the end he was successful.

“Listen,” said the preacher; “there are numbers of people all around you—people whom you often meet—to whom God is infinitely more than your wife is to you. They found God and won Him in just that way. There is no other way. It is a splendid and arduous quest, and you must start upon it.”

That will suggest a second thought: To know God we must take time to be alone with Him.

To be alone. How seldom we can be; how many of our hours are necessarily spent in the companionship of others; how little of our own privacy is undisturbed. Even when opportunity for leisure comes, we run away from it. Seem-

ingly we shrink from the experience of being left alone with our thoughts. "Watch a man of business in a railway station about to board his train for a journey, long or short. With feverish eagerness he is laying in a stock of newspapers which will keep him from thinking until he has reached his destination. If you observe him in his place in the car, you will see him making his way quickly but thoroughly from one end of a newspaper to the other. As fast as he finishes one he throws it upon the floor, siezes another and with unabated zest devours a slightly different version of the same events, always treating the important and the trivial with strict impartiality. Such people cannot possibly know the refreshment of communion with the Unseen. They have no reservoir of spiritual power upon which to draw in time of need."

One cannot imagine a human friendship progressing far, if the friends never have their times of privacy. It is the same with divine friendship. To force ourselves to go apart and rest a while; to force ourselves to think, and think hard; to gain some power of concentration; to look till at last we see, to listen till at last we hear; in short, to practice the presence of God—it is an absolutely necessary step towards the recovery of the Divine Companionship.

I do not mean prayer. I mean that without

which real prayer is impossible—just quiet and intense thought on God, yourself, your life, and its mystery.

If God ever should become very real to you, the thought of Him would drive you into solitude. It was so with John the Baptist. He was “the last and greatest of a long line of prophets to whom had been revealed the approaching advent of Christ. In him were concentrated all the hope and expectation of many generations. All that men had dreamed of and longed for had at last become imminent, and John the Forerunner felt himself charged with a great expectancy. And then just because God had become so real and Christ so near, John by a kind of moral necessity was drawn into the wilderness.” The presence of the Great Companion had become such a living reality that everything else sank into insignificance. He felt that he must go away and have time to think. Every ordinary desire became mean and petty in the presence of this tremendously new experience. All must be banished from the mind, to leave room for the one surpassing thing that had become all important. He must be alone; he must concentrate his soul on Christ’s coming, “lest he lose a moment of His advent or miss a syllable of His message.”

So it is that whenever the divine becomes

actual for us, all else falls into second place. We feel that we must go apart if we are to take in this new truth which God is showing us. It is very natural. Any strong experience draws us away by ourselves—our happiness or our sorrows, our new-found joys and our distress that seems too heavy to bear—we must be alone to face the loss bravely, or to cherish the blessing close for a moment. It is in accordance with the same law that God's coming should take us into the silent places.

Well, it works both ways. Just as the felt presence of God always drives us into solitude, so if we would gain a sense of His presence, we must of ourselves go apart and be quiet. "Be still then, and know that I am God." If God's companionship is to be realized, we must clear the way for His approach; we must make our wilderness where we can be alone with Him. Other thoughts must be banished, that this one great thought may possess us, and fill us, and charge us with its power. Prayer comes afterward. Prayer indeed is useless unless it be addressed to God after we have tried to realize that God is near.

Then, third. The friendship of God demands sacrifice; we must be willing to pay the cost. St. Paul knew God. What a price he had paid for the knowledge! Health, money, freedom, pop-

ularity: can we suppose that he ever regretted the loss of them? No: I count all things but refuse, things to be swept away as dung—so he says—for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.]

Modern Christianity is too smooth and comfortable. It refuses to give generously—either of time and service or of money—for the great gift of the Gospel. Let me quote a letter recently received from a city rector who wrote to tell me of a mission he had planned for his parish:

“If these services do not arouse my people to a life of larger sacrifice,” he says, “I shall be tempted to give up. They take their religion so cheaply. I tell you very frankly that I get heart-sick at what seems to me to be a useless task for an intelligent man to undertake—to permit himself to minister any longer without protest to people who generally seem to be playing at religion and for whom it is hardly more than an occasional Sunday pastime. They can answer every demand that society makes upon them, but they cannot give time to God. And as for the giving of money—the smallest item of their personal expenditure is big in comparison with what they contribute to church and charity. Scores of my people can afford automobiles. The whole congregation this year did not give the price of a moderately expensive

car for missionary work! I may be wrong to feel like running away; indeed, I know I am, but I can't help being discouraged and down-hearted. I long to find somebody *to whom religion is a great reality.*"

One last word. We shall find the Divine Friend in service. The trouble with most of us is that our thoughts are so centred on self that there is little hope of our realizing God. We must rise out of self, forget self; and the only way to do it is in service for others. Days filled with thought for somebody else, lives with human helpfulness as their motive, somehow lead to Christ. Possibly because we cannot live unselfish lives without Him, and the minute we try He comes to help. Possibly because when we begin to "go about doing good," we grow into moral likeness with Him, whereas before our eyes were closed. But however we explain it, the fact is there.

You remember "My Lady of the Chimney Corner," Alexander Irvine's beautiful story of his mother's life. She was only an Irish peasant living all her married life in a dull Irish village. She was poor, ignorant, unlearned; but not so poor that she did not generously share her little with those who were as poor, or poorer; not so ignorant that she did not know the best thing life can teach, how to minister with sympathy

whenever pain or sickness sent its call; not so unlettered that she could not read the language of the human heart, and there was no house across whose threshold the shadow of death had fallen that was not richer for her knowledge.

One day the girls of the village were talking about religion. They felt that it would be so easy to be good, if Christ could be seen, as the Blessed Virgin had seen Him. If only He would come into their little village and live among them, as He had lived in Bethlehem! Then "My Lady of the Chimney Corner" spoke, and there were tears in her voice. "My dears," she said, "I think I have seen Him every day for five and thirty years."

She had seen Him in the way that you and I must try to see Him, in the persons of those she had helped in His name. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." We must learn to look for Christ where He has told us He is to be found. Seeing Him there, some day we shall see Him with yet clearer vision; we shall see and know Him as He is.

VI

UNDER THE ALL-SEEING EYE

IN "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," a play which made a profound impression when it was given some years ago, and is no less effective now as literature, we are introduced to the occupants of a cheap middle-class London boarding-house of genteel respectability. The boarders are types of people one meets every day—a little exaggerated, perhaps, as all things must be to make an effective stage picture, but exaggerated only as Dickens draws his characters, to emphasize the type. We are familiar with them all, their snobbishness and selfishness, their petty dishonesties and meannesses, their trickery and social scheming, their jealousies and rivalries, their low moral standards, their gossip and worse, their perpetual struggles (so characteristic apparently of most boarding-house folk) to get the most they can and give the least. It is a painful picture, showing the dull sordidness of a life that paralyzes every generous impulse and crushes out all natural good feeling.

Into this atmosphere of utter self-seeking there comes a new boarder, the Passer-by who

rents the third floor back; and in a month he has changed the whole tone of the place. He will not believe that these people are as bad as they themselves think that they are; he persists in looking for the better self in each unlovely character, and finally he shames out of them all their meanness and selfishness, all the silly conceit and sinful ambition that makes them so unlovely to others and hateful to themselves. They are ashamed to be anything but their best so long as he is there. They wish somehow to prove worthy of his confidence and esteem. They feel forced to live up to what he takes for granted that they are. Indeed, the outer crust falls off and reveals a truer self within, of which they were not aware. He said it was there and always acted on the assumption that it was, and after a while they come to believe that he really was right. He recalls them to the finer and truer personalities which he always said they were, and he leaves them anxious to stand worthy of his ideal. "You have always taken it for granted," says one of the characters, a Jew who had turned from his trickery and clever dishonesty to a straighter course; "you have always taken it for granted, sir, in all our conversation, that I was a fine fellow, in sympathy with fine ideals. But that is not what surprises me; it is to find—that you are right!"

The Passer-by does for that London boarding house what Jesus Christ does for the world. He is like the Sun of Righteousness, who comes with healing in His wings. At his first entrance in the play the sun breaks through the London fog and floods the dull drawing-room; as he finally departs it comes out again to shed a halo over the departing guest, who leaves for other labors elsewhere. "I must go. I also am a servant, and I have my work to do. I must go; I only came for a time. I came—because you needed me."

When one has come to feel that Jesus Christ is the Divine Companion, the transformation of character that follows is just what Jerome pictures in his play. We want to be "worthy to stand before the Son of Man." And the beauty of the Christian religion lies just in this, that it puts the emphasis that way. It is a religion of love, and "perfect love casteth out fear." There have been other religious motives—and for a time they gave real strength of purpose—which were wholly motives of fear. We have been taught that we live under the all-seeing eye of God, and that we must tremble lest we offend Him. Perhaps there are times when nothing but that fear of the divine disfavor will drive us out of our sin. It may be necessary sometimes, for some people, even in this day and generation,

to "put the fear of God in their hearts." There is the possibility that we shall never feel the pain and the shame and the horror of sin, save through holy fear—a fear that comes from the thought of a God with whom we dare not trifle and take liberties, a God whose holiness is like a consuming fire.

And yet the reverence that springs from such fear must give place, as we grow into a fuller appreciation of the Christian faith, to a reverence more hushed and still, an instinctive feeling of God's wondrous purity that makes us not afraid, but ashamed, to offend Him or to fall short of what He expects of us.

A friend told me the other day of a dream she had—was it a dream?—while sitting quietly in her garden, alone in the calm of an approaching summer evening. She looked up from her work, and down the paths of the garden walked a Figure which she recognized as that of our Lord. It was so real to her that she cannot talk about it much—so moving that she cannot listen to any possible natural explanation of the vision. Nor would one wish to offer explanation. "I looked," she said, "and as I looked, I had but one thought. It crowded out every other. It was just this: How can I ever offend Him again—ever do anything unworthy of Him?"

"Worthy to stand before the Son of Man."

All of us have had our ideals, dulled over though they may be now. All of us, too, have had some one we wanted to please, some one whose expectations we would not wholly disappoint. The boy at school—there was *one* teacher who always brought out what was best in him. The young man—there was a leader in professional life who awoke ambition in his heart and made him feel that he wanted to “make good.” Or, he had a good mother who was careful to win and keep the boy’s confidence—only to deserve her affection and prove worthy of her was incentive enough in life for him. He grows into manhood and falls in love. It stills his heart, if the girl who has won him is the right sort of girl, and his one desire is to be at his best in her sight, never to disappoint her hopes or fall short of her ideals.

All that, and much more than all that, we find in the desire which any clear vision of Christ arouses. Not to fail in His sight; not to fall below His standards; to be what He wants us to be; to show ourselves the kind of men He says we can be; to “make good” in His presence; to be “worthy to stand before the Son of Man”—that is not the religion of fear; it is a religion of high and holy purpose, the consecration of a love that is ashamed to hurt and humiliate. Love more deep and strong.

As the great gift of the Gospel is the personal companionship of God in Christ, so the heart of religion is the effort to live as in the presence of a Friend like that. It was for this that Christ came—because we needed Him.

We needed Him that He might show us the true moral standard for men. Not the standard of our set; not what people think in the office or the factory or the store; not what is the current thought of the business or professional world; but the standard of Christ's own life. What would He do if He were here in my place? That, and nothing less than that, is the standard by which we shall be measured, the standard of "the man Christ Jesus."

And we need Him to make us understand that we *can* be what He asks. He always believed the best in men. He was ever generous and magnanimous in His judgment of them. There was Nathaniel: "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." There was St. Peter: "Thou art the Rock-man." He knew Peter, knew his weakness, his cowardice, his boastfulness; but He put all that aside because He saw also Peter's zeal and warmheartedness, and down underneath the weakness He recognized the rock nature. It is in this way that He looks at us now, and He never despairs. It has been beautifully said, "There is hardly a roadside pond

or pool which has not as much landscape in it as above it. It is not the dull, brown muddy thing we suppose it to be. It has a heart like ourselves, and in the bottom of that there are the boughs of the tall trees, and the blades of the shaking grass, and all manner of variable pleasant light out of the sky. Nay, that ugly gutter which stagnates over the drain bars in the heart of the great city is not altogether base. Down in that, if you will look deep enough, you may see the dark, serious blue of the far-off sky, and the passing of the pure clouds. It is at your own will that you see in that despised stream the refuse of the streets, or the image of the sky." That is Jesus Christ's way of looking into human hearts.

We have not begun to understand Christianity until we have discovered that the secret of it lies in devotion to a Person. "Men see their duty in every land and age with exasperating clearness; but they know not how to do it. No one condemns the good, he leaves it undone. No one approves the evil, he simply does it." The real trouble is that a mere code of morality lacks driving power. We believe in goodness, and most of us, perhaps, would ordinarily prefer to do what is right; but no one ever yet found an incentive to holiness in a system of ethics. We must understand that we are living in the

presence of a personal God, who sees every act, hears every word and knows every thought. The modern world is ceasing to believe in God that way. It believes vaguely in a Power that makes for righteousness. Our only hope lies in the appreciation of what Christianity is—not obedience to moral laws, but devotion to Him whose laws they are. “Before Jesus, goodness was sterile; since Jesus, it has blossomed. Hitherto righteousness had been spotless and admirable, but cold as ice. Jesus suddenly identifies righteousness with Himself and has brought it to pass that no man can love Him without loving righteousness. By one stroke, He makes love and law synonymous, and duty, which had always been respectable, now becomes lovely.” All because He came calling men to Himself, asking their personal allegiance and love, and making life a loyal following of Him as the Captain of their salvation.

There are two ways of putting that before men. One is to say that you and I are ever in the presence of Jesus Christ, that hour by hour He reads our hearts and passes judgment on our lives, and that every day brings us nearer to that Great Day of accounting, when the record He has been reading shall be laid bare. The terror of death is that the veil is lifted and we discover ourselves to be in the presence of Christ, just the same

people five minutes after death that we were before; the terror of the day of judgment is that then we shall know what we might have known all along, that Jesus Christ is looking us through and through and seeing us as we are; and the terror of eternal loss is not the fear of an age-long torment by fire, but the knowledge that never having cared, and never repented, and never felt any real sense of sin, and never striven towards amendment, we are ushered into another life absolutely unworthy "to stand before the Son of Man," and yet knowing that His eyes of fire still read our hearts and will keep on reading them forever.

That is one way of putting the truth. We make a mistake, if we suppose that it never needs to be put that way. But we make a greater mistake if we suppose that it is the best way. No: we are in Christ's presence now. He is the Passer-by. He expects so much of us. He knows, even if we do not, that we are capable of all He asks. Surely, it only remains for us to understand that He is here, and we shall rise to His expectations. If there is any kind of a God, He *must* be that kind: a Person, for He cannot be less than we who proceed from Him, and *we* are persons; a present Person, for He must fill every particle of the universe which owes its existence to Him.

The glory of Christianity is, that it does so reveal God as a present Person: Emmanuel, God with us. But the beauty and romance of Christianity is that its call is a summons to obedience and reverent devotion to this present Person: one who sees us every moment, and asks for our love, and knows better than we how much we can give, and can shame out of us all selfishness and sin, and will welcome with generous appreciation every act of service and proclaim every victory won.

That is what made the Christian faith a power in the past; that and that only can make our Christianity a power to-day. "For my sake" is the motto of vital religion. As Ian MacLaren says: "When Jesus founded His religion on personal attachment, it seemed a fond imagination: the perennial vitality of Christianity has been His vindication. 'For my sake' has opened a new spring of conduct, from which has flowed the heroism and saintliness of nineteen centuries."

"Christianity is in religion what steam is in mechanics, the power that drives."

VII

IF I COULD BE A CHILD AGAIN

“WHY is it that grown people do not need to pray any more?”

The question was asked by a child who would soon cease to be a child. He was beginning to notice and think. And he had observed what is a tragedy of the home life, that there was a difference between his parents' teaching and their practice. They expected him to pray; his mother was quite careful about his evening devotions. But *they* did not pray. Why?

It was a hard question to answer. I gave him a halting explanation of what prayer is—an explanation which I knew could not take the place of a reply to his difficulty—and then at the first opportunity, passed the question on to his parents.

“You teach your child to pray. He is beginning to notice things now, and he finds that you do not pray yourselves. What is *your* explanation of the inconsistency?”

It must be confessed that I was hardly prepared for the tragedy of the response. There was a

break in the mother's voice, and the father could not but show something of his confusion and discomfort. "Oh, I wish I could!" she said. "I do, in a perfunctory fashion; but I can't be sure that it is worth while. Then I stop, and by and by I begin again; but it doesn't seem real. Why put so much effort into it if it isn't worth while? Does the world look like a world where prayer counts? When the great war began, we were all summoned to prayer. We asked God to stop this awful carnage. All over Europe men and women filled the churches and prayed as they had never prayed before. What did God do? Nothing. It made me think, and the more I thought the harder were all the difficulties. I remembered all my own prayers—when we lost our baby, and I had asked God so often that he might be spared; when things were so hard at home, before my marriage, and they never were straightened out; when the Doctor told us the truth about Margaret's illness, and you know she is never going to be strong, all her life. I try to pray as I used to, but I can't—I can't—and it seems just miserable hypocrisy to keep on trying when I know it does no good. I wouldn't say one word to rob little Jack of his faith; but what can I do? what shall I say? If I could only be a child again, and believe, as he does! But how can I believe any more in what we used

to call Providence, much less in a special Providence? You can't put yourself into anything, if you are not convinced that it is worth while; and I can't pray, not really. I just say the words, because I can't bear altogether to give it up; but it doesn't mean anything. If I could only have back the faith I had when I was a girl; but that will never be."

The experience is a common one, is it not? From childhood we have prayed, and back in the days of innocent faith it seemed very real. We asked for all sorts of things and had full confidence that what we asked for would surely be given. Who cannot remember days of faith like that? Who has not seen such complete trust in little children of to-day? They will pray for anything and everything: good weather for a coming excursion or a holiday; the gifts they long for at Christmas; all the simple desires of simple childish hearts. They were perfectly sure, when the Christmas gift came, that it was because they had prayed for it; if it did not come, they knew that another delightful thing they had not thought of had come in its place, and it was God's glad surprise.

Then one day the child mind waked up—waked to disappointment of unanswered desire. The child saw what *we* had seen all along, that the seeming answer was a mere coincidence, it

just happened that way; or that the prayer had been unavailing, the petition was unheard. The child's faith had its first hard blow. His eyes were opened. His belief was gone.

And then the blows came thick and fast. In time of great danger we prayed, but the danger did not pass. In time of impending sorrow we prayed, but death came none the less certainly. In time of our own distress we prayed, and the heavens were closed and God did not answer. We began to feel that God rules the world by laws which He cannot or will not break; that there are laws of health, and they work with inevitable regularity; laws of economics, and ruin follows their violation; laws of nature, and though slow of operation they are always sure.

We gave up. Prayer had not done what we believed it could do; and we never could pray that way again. We long for the faith of the trusting child—a faith that, in the bottom of our hearts, we know can never be ours again. It doesn't return and we surrender to the inevitable; surrender, instead of wrestling and straining for the richer faith that may yet be, the safer, surer, firmer faith of the adult believer.

"Why do *you* pray?" So the mother turned the question back upon the questioner.

Why *do* I pray?

First, because Jesus Christ prayed. He knows

better than I. Whatever you believe about Him, He knew more about God than any other man has known. We Christians believe that He knew all about God, because He came from the bosom of the Father. It is, therefore, a right instinct that drives us to God. The instinct is always there. We find prayer to be a natural thing. And now I know that it is something more than simply a vague natural instinct; it is a God-implemented desire. I take it on the word of Jesus Christ. He taught us to pray.

And He prayed Himself. He lived in an atmosphere of devotion. Prayer was the very breath of His life. We think of all those long nights of devotion, of the early hours of communion, while it was yet dark, of the prayers before He chose the Twelve, of the prayer before He asked the momentous question of St. Peter, of the prayer in the agony of Gethsemane, of the last word on the cross, when dying as a criminal, deserted by His friends, surrounded by His enemies, suffering intense physical pain, and just triumphing after a fearful struggle with spiritual desolation, He yet fell asleep in deepest and fullest communion with God, breathing a prayer to the Father, of whose love He was always certain and in whose presence He was always safe.

I think He knew.

Sometimes I ask why He ever needed to pray;

for I believe that He was the Son of God, of the same substance with the Father. The reason is plain. He is divine; but He laid aside His divine majesty to come among His brethren and live their life, and He meant to live it under human conditions, not using His divine power, but only such powers as we have. So He prayed, because prayer was the source of His human strength. As man He needed to be "in tune with the Infinite"; He must preserve His fellowship with the Father. Therefore He needed to pray. If it was needful for Him, it must be for all.

Second. Then I try to make my prayers like His. One day His disciples came upon Him at His devotions. They were earnest, devout men, themselves, men of prayer; but somehow that day, as they looked at Him, they felt as if they had never really prayed in all their lives, and they said, "Lord, teach *us* to pray." Tell us the secret of it. Show us how to pray as Thou dost pray.

There was very little of mere petition in Christ's prayers. He hardly ever asked anything for Himself—though He *did* ask sometimes. His prayers were prayers that took Him straight into the Father's presence. "Show Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto Thee." Prayer is something more than petition; it is worship.

There was very little of self in Christ's prayers. The great prayer which He taught His disciples is all in the plural. I cannot use it for myself alone. I join myself in its petitions with all His children everywhere: those degraded Mexican peasants who have been taught to hate Americans; those careless, ignorant foreigners who are a menace to my child's health; those persecuted Armenians driven away from home and country; those brave Belgians whose sturdy defence saved civilization, though it stretched them on a sacrificial cross; those poor girls in the factory fire in the great city whose lives paid the price of industrial cupidity; that woman whose malicious gossip hurt more than any one but myself will ever know; that man whose dishonesty robbed me of my savings of a lifetime. I pray for them all, and prayer brings a peace I had never thought to find.

Christ's prayers were full of God: the longing for His glory, for the coming of His kingdom, for the fulfilment of His purpose, for the hallowing of His name. I try to pray that way.

And I try to live as I pray. For His promise is a limited promise. "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will." There is much that I have yet to learn about abiding in Him, but I try.

Third. My prayers have taught me something.

The common conception of prayer is that it is an effort to bend God's purpose to our wish; and the sadness of the awakening is due to the discovery that the facts do not warrant the assumption. Thinking more of God, I find that He does rule the world by law and that to grant my prayer sometimes would be to break a link in the chain of cause and effect and throw the universe into ungoverned disorder.

What then? Does it mean that a great range of petition has become unlawful? Of course not. As there are laws of nature and laws of health, so there are spiritual laws, and my prayer may set in motion forces that will counterbalance other forces, just as by mechanics I can overcome the law of gravitation. What do I know about the spiritual world? May not God have laid down its laws, so that much of His giving shall be dependent upon my asking, exactly as the rich treasures of the earth—the grain in the fields, the fruit on the trees, the wealth of the mines—are all of them ours only when we have done our part to earn them?

Shall I give up prayer in sickness, for example? The laws of psycho-therapy are beginning to show me that more things are done by prayer than this world dreams of. Perhaps, after all, my faith has never been very great, and my prayers for a sick friend have been offered with no decided

belief or expectation. "All things that ye ask, believing," was the way Christ put it; and I have been praying always with the thought in the background that the prayer could not avail. Of course it may not. In the face of facts—bitter facts of experience for others as well as for myself—I know that there are laws which no prayer will ever overcome. But I pray on, nevertheless; and when the answer does not come, sometimes at least I see more clearly.

Fourth. One thing I see is, that God often answers prayer through human agents and in human work. The skill and understanding of the physician; the new health laws which medical science is constantly discovering; above all, the deeper sympathy with the world's pain and the quickened desire to help which have lightened to such an extent the world's burden—who knows what part prayer has had in all this? The spirit of social service which has brought light into so many dark places and made human life so much less unendurable—who can say how much prayer had to do with the enlightenment? The new sense of corporate responsibility, with its education towards a better industrial order—has prayer had nothing to do with opening our eyes there? There is indeed an "intercession which is co-operation with God"; and God has been showing us many things of late of which the world has

long been ignorant. The growth of the social spirit as a late fruit of Christianity may "make possible the rebirth of a Christian community which can become the strongest force in the world," and prayer pointed out the path of progress.

Fifth. Out of all of this, I am learning wherein lies the true efficacy of prayer. It is not, as I thought in the days when I spake as a child and understood as a child, that the divine purpose may be bent to my will; it is rather, that my will may be brought into submission to the divine purpose. In the Garden of Gethsemane Christ prayed a prayer which seemed not to be answered. The answer really came in the gradual disclosure of the Father's will. You see it as the prayer continued: First, "Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from Me." Then, "*If this cup may not pass from Me*, except I drink it, Thy will be done." Three times: "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And then: "There appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him." Prayer that made God's will clear, and prayer that brought strength to submit to it.

So I pray because Jesus Christ prayed; and I try to pray *as* He prayed. "The Son of Man feels the hour at hand; shrinks from it, flies from human society—feels the need of it again, and goes back to His disciples. Here is that need of

sympathy which forces us to seek for it among relatives and friends; and here is that recoil which forces us back to our loneliness again. In such an hour they who have before forgotten prayer betake themselves to God, knowing that only with Him can perfect understanding and sympathy be found."

"If I could be a child again!" But I never shall be, save as the child's simple faith issues in the childlike spirit of submission and humility and trust. I cannot pray as the child used to pray, but I *will* pray as the child of God *must*. "Have I lost all that I prized in prayer? Oh, no. I have lost the certainty of getting my own wish; I have got instead the knowledge of God's will. Is that nothing? And shall I dare to say that prayer is no boon at all unless I can reverse the spirit of my Master's prayer, and say, "Not as *Thou* wilt, but as *I* will"?"

VIII

THE LAST WORD IN RELIGION

JESUS CHRIST is "the last word" in religion. The revelation of the divine which He gave is so complete that we cannot imagine anything to surpass it. All through the centuries there had been a growing knowledge of God. That knowledge came in many ways; it was added to, bit by bit; it became steadily clearer; finally it reached its climax in Jesus Christ, in Whom the revelation was perfect, both in substance and in form. What He showed us of God has been wrought out slowly since, as it has come to be more clearly understood; little by little it has been appropriated in the experience of later life; but nothing has ever been added to it; nothing can ever be expected that will exceed it. It answers and corresponds to every human hope and aspiration. If it were rejected, we should be left in dim uncertainty—we could look for nothing to take its place. As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it, "God having of old time spoken to the fathers in the prophets, in many parts, and in many ways, hath at the end of these days spoken to us in His Son."

There was a crisis in Christ's ministry which brought this fact clearly to the consciousness of the apostles. In the early part of His ministry everything went smoothly. The common people heard Him gladly, the crowds followed Him, and He aroused among the Galilean people an enthusiasm so great that apparently He could have done anything with them. The freshness and virility of His teaching, in contrast with the dry formality of the Scribes and Pharisees, its authority and power, swept the crowds off their feet; in the pitch of their enthusiasm they would have made Him a king. Then gradually His teaching became more severe, it made moral demands upon them, it rose to higher spiritual reaches. In His conversation with Nicodemus He showed that entrance into His kingdom would demand a moral renewal so great that He called it a second birth, and later He taught that this new spiritual life must be fed from Himself. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." The eager enthusiasts who were looking only for a restoration of Israel's material glory, felt their hopes dashed to the ground when He kept insisting upon His mission as purely spiritual and called upon them to look for the kingdom of God within them. They were keen patriots, but not many of them, any more than many are to-day, were men of high

and holy purpose, more interested in being made right with God than in the restoration of earthly privilege and power.

And so the fickle crowds began slowly to melt. He disappointed their expectations, dissipated their hopes; their enthusiasm cooled, and they gradually dropped away.

It was a crisis in His career. Were there any who would hold? Could He trust those few who were closest to Him to stand fast? Must His mission be a failure and His plans come to nothing, because there would be left no material out of which he could build? So, as "many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him," he turned to the Twelve. What about them? "Will ye also go away?"

It was a crisis for the apostles as well. One of them failed. Judas had been counting on an earthly kingdom, with material rewards and place and power for himself. He began to feel cheated, became resentful, gradually came to the point where he determined that it was best for him to get out before the crash came—and because he felt that he has been tricked and deceived, made up his mind to get all that he could out of the wreck before he left. The Lord saw it all. "Did I not choose you, the Twelve, and one of you is a very devil?"

It was a crisis, no less, for the other apostles;

but however mixed had been their motives when they joined the messianic band, they had spiritual stuff in them that made them grow into deeper and deeper appreciation of the Master, and their hearts were knit closer and closer to Him in love. And so though they could not understand, they could trust. More than that, they felt that a privilege had been given them than which nothing could be greater. So Peter voiced the feeling of the others when he answered: "Go away? To whom, Lord, shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and know that Thou art the Holy One of God."

They are overwhelmed. The world seems reeling under their feet. They had expected much and had expected it at once, and they were disappointed. The crowds were leaving—and they had counted on all this popularity to carry Him to His own. But though they are puzzled, and the very foundations seem to be slipping away, they do not fail in faith. "To whom shall we go?" There can be no higher revelation than Thine—that is what Peter meant. There can be no surer light than this we have had. It cannot fail. We do not understand, but we cannot have been mistaken. After this, there can be nothing. Our hopes are upset and our expectations disappointed, but we have the vision of all visions, and there can be none clearer. We believe,—

no, we know—that Thou art the Holy One of God.

Christ “the last word” in religion. That is what St. Peter says.

And Christ is still “the last word.” It may not be much of an argument for Christianity; but it has a certain amount of satisfaction for practical people to-day who cannot think things out very clearly and are not able to express even what they do think. They hold fast their faith, because, whether they understand or not, they feel that in the Christian religion the last possible word has been spoken about God and His world and there can be no revelation beyond it. It is this or nothing. This, even though the light be dim sometimes, this—or utter darkness and no solution of life’s mysteries.

To whom shall *we* go? There are difficulties about the faith to-day—shifting changes of thought that make it hard for some to believe. New thoughts have upset all our old conceptions. The Bible is not what we used to think it was. The Church—we have had to modify our idea of it in the face of divisions once inconceivable. New movements of thought have brought other difficulties, difficulties that arise out of the problem of evil, out of the growing sense of social injustice, out of the new appreciation of social responsibility. Things are dark enough some-

times. But they are darker still without Christian faith.

Take the field of the world's doubt. The great war has focussed all the difficulties that men have ever felt in the past into one passionate protest. We are like Habakkuk of old. He lived in times that tried men's souls. At home a people recreant to God's call; abroad a power that knew no law but its own ambition and its own strength, threatening to overwhelm the earth. Obstinate questionings could not fail to force themselves upon every thoughtful mind. After all, was brute force, not righteousness, the arbiter of human destiny? Habakkuk wrestled with God and at last had his answer. "Behold his soul is puffed up, it is not upright within him; but the just shall live in his faithfulness"; that is, evil has no principle of permanence; though it deifies its own strength, it is doomed to perish; the righteous finds life in his own integrity and faithfulness.

It may be doubted whether the answer, if there were no more, would satisfy men to-day. It throws us back on faith; but faith must have its grip on fact. In Jesus Christ we have the divine fact. Son of God, of the same substance with the Father—He came to reveal God and to assure us that, despite the mystery of evil, divine love still rules the world. We shall never understand the

presence of suffering and sorrow; we cannot understand, but we can *know*. We know that God is love, because we know that Jesus Christ is love—and Christ is God. God, in the person of Jesus Christ, once walked this earth, and in His presence we believe and are sure. Whatever awful calamity or heart-breaking personal sorrow assail our faith, Christ our Lord calls us back to belief.

Give Him up—and then what? To whom shall we go? Somehow we cannot give Him up; we believe with surer faith just because this is a creed that satisfies every longing for light.

Or take the fact of sorrow in its more personal aspect. There is no one who does not sooner or later face it. Those whom we have loved long since and lost—is it only for a while? Or have we loved them for a brief day to know them again no more forever? That is the one passionate yearning of humanity for which we want a sure and certain answer. Is there another world? Is there an endless life? Or is the grave our only goal? We may argue about it; but argument does not satisfy a heart that bleeds. We may hope—but however reasonable, mere hope brings no comfort. In Jesus Christ we have certainty. “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.”

Again: Give Him up—and then what? It may be that you cannot but give Him up. You would believe if you could, but it is impossible. In all life there is nothing more pathetic than a loss of faith like that—the loss of all that one holds most precious; for the return of which one would pay any price. Romanes lost his faith in a personal God, though afterward he recovered it, and the words in which he describes his feeling when he had come to a virtual denial of God are full of tragic intensity: “When I think, as think at times I must, of the hallowed glory of that creed which once was mine, and the lonely mystery of existence as I now find it—at such times it will ever be impossible for me to avoid the sharpest pang of which my nature is susceptible.”

But most loss of faith does not come in that way, after an agony of wrestling. It is a slower growth. It creeps on through days of neglect and indifference, and then suddenly, at some sharp and anguishing blow, it goes altogether. Faith can survive almost anything except being ignored. It will hold firm during many trials, it will weather many storms; the one thing that is sure to kill it is neglect. And with most unbelief the cause may be traced to a slothful neglect. We fail to face things straight when we have the chance, and then our whole creed

tumbles like a pack of cards in the first wind of adversity.

We must look at our faith squarely now, while we have it; see what it really means; get some solid realization of its resources of strength; some appreciation of its possibilities of comfort. Then, when trial days come, we have something to fall back on. If through our own fault, faith has been frittered away, at least let us know now that there is nothing that can take its place. It is this light, or it is the blackness of darkness forever. "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. We believe and know."

Of course we must be reasonably assured of the fact of Christ's resurrection, and we Christians do believe that it is as certainly and undeniably established as any event ever recorded in history; but being assured of that there is for us no more need of arguments.

Yet there is one more question: Suppose there is a future life: shall *we* enjoy it? Shall we be fitted for it? You and I—we know our utter unworthiness: how can we ever enter upon the life of eternity in the presence of God? How shall we ever become possessors of everlasting life, though we know there is such a life?

Such questions are not asked often enough in these days. In a revulsion against a morbidness that made religion a life of unhealthy intro-

spection, we have now gone to the other extreme and we hardly face the fact of sin at all. We have made God loose, lax, kindly and indifferent. Yet sin is there, and sleeping dogs cannot always lie undisturbed. Sometime its presence must be felt; sometime its horror appreciated. How shall we be cleansed and purified?

Christian belief has given the only solution. "In the person of His Son, God Himself has taken upon Him the burden of our sins and with His stripes we are healed. The cross was the sign and proof of the absolutely infinite love of God for us—love which has no limits and will even suffer for us that we may live. All through life men and women are bearing each other's burdens and atoning for each other's sins. And now into this process comes infinite love and infinite innocence, the love and innocence of the Son of God. Hence we know that in the end evil may work itself out on Him and be expiated." These are the words of a layman who after many doubts and through much stumbling found his way back to the simple faith of the old Gospel. They are a record of the perpetual experience of all who have ever looked into their own hearts deeply and been afraid. Let that faith go, and what have we left? To whom else can we go? Grip it, and oh! what an inspiration it brings. To be assured that the struggle will issue in triumph—that gives spring

and cheer in the midst of the contest. He whom I have tried to follow here has won for me and even now helps me, and in Him I shall rest at last in the perfect peace that crowns all strife. Give Him up, just because I cannot understand it—and what has the world to put in its place?

No: “the man who has recognized the freedom of Jesus, and has found freedom and power in trying to imitate Him and to share His point of view, will not easily doubt that He was the Son of God, or that He is alive; that His death was more than an ordinary death, or that it has power of renewal for us. The man who has not experienced any of these things, nor recognized them in others, has not understood the foundations of Christianity.”

Finally, what about life's work? It was a healthy reaction which led men to think more of life than of death. Never have more people been keen about a working religion than now. Never has there been more honest desire to make faith a practical power. Never has it been realized as now that this power is for all of life, public as well as private, social as well as individual, for the city and the state and the nation as well as the home, for the office and the shop as well as the house of worship.

And the wonderful thing is that with this leaven at work in the world we are discovering

daily so many forgotten things in the life and teaching of our Lord. A remarkable study of Christ appeared recently under the title of "The Unappropriated Christ." It gave some hint of the lessons we have yet to learn from Him: lessons of citizenship from One who cleansed Jerusalem and the temple of petty graft; lessons of fellowship from One who made human brotherhood the basis of His kingdom; lessons of optimism from One who never despaired of human kind. Every hopeful movement of social reform has its root in His teaching, whether acknowledged or not, and we are finding in His words the only safe guiding principles for the new kingdom that is coming in power, we are seeing more and more clearly that where His spirit is absent there is no justice and righteousness wide enough and charitable enough to promise permanence and lasting peace.

His has been a progressive revelation. Men thought that Christianity was something other than it really is, and with the impatience of zealots in a crusade they had thrown away the old faith and sought elsewhere for light and inspiration. Now they are coming back to Him. All they asked for, He had all the while to give. Many of His own followers did not know it, and the blame for the rejection lay with them. There had been no need to seek new paths—

He had already led the way. There was no hope in new systems—His was always the best. We need go nowhere else for light. Indeed, where could we go, had He failed? “Each period in civilization has had, in turn, its own peculiar interest and its own spiritual demands, and each, in turn, following its own path back to the teaching of Jesus, has found there what seemed an extraordinary adaptation of that teaching to immediate issues and needs. . . . As it has happened a thousand times before, so it is likely to happen again, that the Gospel, examined afresh with a new problem in mind, will seem again to have been written in large part to meet the needs of the new age.”

“Thou hast the words of eternal life. We believe and are sure.”

SOME FORGOTTEN TRUTHS OF
CHRIST'S TEACHING

IX

BACK TO CHRIST

“BACK to Christ.” It is the cry of the day. It fills popular thought. It colors popular theology. People are weary of the religion that used to be preached in the churches and is sometimes preached even now. It was a religion of controversy, where Protestants were engaged in proving that Romanists were superstitious idolaters and Romanists were busy reading everybody else out of the Church, and ministers of one denomination were spending half their time in showing that the members of other denominations were wrong or in expounding subtle articles of belief to prove that only they themselves were right.

There came a natural revulsion against this type of controversial Christianity, and then the swing of the pendulum brought with it the preaching of a platitudinous morality that was not much better. It was based on the assumption that belief was a matter of utter unimportance. “What difference does it make what we believe if we are trying to be good?”

The trouble with the new kind of preaching was, that usually it was stupidly uninteresting. I suppose if most people were asked to give their honest opinion about sermons they would confess that such preaching usually bores them to death. It doesn't interest them to be told Sunday after Sunday that if they are good they will be happy, with an occasional variation that leads them to suppose that they will also be lonely.

In one of Birmingham's stories there is an account of the downfall of a clergyman who believed with all his heart in the morality which he preached in church and found the conventionally good people of his congregation repeating in their conversation. He believed it all, but it was so dismally dull. Life was flat, stale and unprofitable just because it was so piously perfect. If we knew the whole truth of the matter we should probably find that a great many people have stopped going to church because the services and the sermons are uninspiring in exactly that way. After all, there cannot be many fresh variations in discourses on the moralities.

It was a step forward when the clergy began to preach social service, but even that became tiresome when so many dilettante social reformers took up the cry. Everybody seemed to have a hobby and was earnestly convinced that his special panacea would instantly usher in the mil-

lennium. People who wanted religion went to church and heard politics preached by men who were as ignorant of public life as new-born babes. Business men were told how to manage their affairs by clergymen who could not administer the small finances of their own parishes. Smatterers in sociology preached earnestly (and inaccurately) about many isms, and the churches began positively to exude the spirit of the uplift.

Of course if faith is to be vital it must move through every sphere of human activity. Social righteousness is just Christianity translated into modern terms and seeking to change modern life, and there was something splendid in this awakening of the Church's social conscience. The real difficulty was that social service had become a fad, which everybody took up, and often men who went to church to hear about Christ left not having once heard His name save in perfunctory prayers that failed to touch their hearts or kindle their emotions.

All the while there was need to go back to Christ. Morality must be made personal allegiance and devotion to Him as our Leader. Social service must catch His spirit of brotherly helpfulness, of large-hearted belief in humanity, of sanctification "for their sakes." All the while the wonderful fact was that those who were close to Christ had the power of communicating His

goodness. There was a real hunger of the heart for faith and only Christ could satisfy it. A popular novelist who wrote a *Life of Christ* tells how the study brought to her an experience always full of wonder and charm. She felt that she had made a new, a supreme acquaintance. She came to have a passionate desire to pass over this feeling to those who can understand it, or who may share it, and to wish it, from the heart, for those who do not.

Yet, even with this new longing to know Christ better, there are still so many misunderstandings. What does the cry "Back to Christ" usually mean? It is to get back of churches and creeds; back of councils and dogmatic decrees; back of the disputations of rival schools; back of the traditions and customs which men feel have overlaid the simple truths that the Master taught; to go back even of the later apostolic teaching, and come face to face with Jesus Himself and see Him as He was—that is the cry of men who say they are weary of dogma and want life, weary of creed and will be content if only they can get character. We want Christ, they say, not the Church. Show us the simple, majestic figure of the Master; let us have only what He taught; let us see what His attitude was, what He really demanded of men; let us hear His voice as it came to His followers when they

walked and talked with Him long ago in the fields and hills of Judea and Galilee.

In the popular conception, therefore, going "back to Christ" means throwing aside a lot of "theological rubbish." It means that the Church's system will be found to be a later accretion, the Church's doctrine a later philosophical development. When we get back to Christ, so men feel, we shall find ourselves in the presence of an undogmatic teacher of the life beautiful, one who cared nothing for organized religion and a teaching Church, who asked only for personal love and allegiance and stressed the need of individual fellowship, with no Church or sacrament, no priest or formal worship, to come between the soul and God.

We Churchmen do not believe for a moment that this is a true picture of the Christ. He *was* all that the devoutest imagination can picture Him in the simple beauty of His life. He *did* ask, first of all, with intensity of insistence, for personal love, personal loyalty and devotion.

But, at the same time, He purposely founded a Church; He left it a body of truth to teach; He gave it sacraments and a new and pure worship. He did all this that there might be provided a means of approach to Him, so that we might better know Him and follow Him. He says to us of to-day: "I want you. Give Me

your heart. Be satisfied with nothing less than the enjoyment of personal friendship with Me. But be quite sure that to have all this and be all this, you must use the means I have provided."

To us, it is not conceivable that our Lord would say that it makes no difference what we believe, whether we belong to the Church or not, whether or not we are faithful in its worship and in the use of its sacraments. With Him it was not a question as to whether men believed, but as to *how* they believed. We cannot read the story of His ministry without discovering that He always put faith in the foreground. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." And why? Because "this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."

Did Christ indeed say nothing about the Church and the sacraments? Did He say nothing about doctrine? We know what St. Paul felt about right belief. With a world waiting to be converted, he took time to explain and re-explain his faith. His epistles develop a complete system of theology. He was always stressing, above all else, the absolute need of a right attitude toward Christ the Son of God. But we are not stopping at St. Paul, we are going back to Christ. Jesus Christ was constantly pointing men to

Himself and asking, What do you think about Me? Unless you believe in Me aright, He seems to say, you will have small incentive to follow Me. I am the Way—walk ye in it; I am the Truth—accept and believe it; I am the Life—receive and live it. The Christian life can be lived only through faith in Me. The Christian character is the outcome of the Christian creed.

The Gospel, in other words, is not a creedless Gospel. The creed is a Gospel creed.

We are not wrong then, are we, in saying that when we go back to the Master Himself as the source of our teaching, we find that some things are important which the modern world has been forgetting? To preach Christ does not mean to have a spineless theology. "An ugly yet God-designed skeleton underlies every beautiful form of divine creation," and our creeds and formularies may be the framework on which we are to build a life of Christian beauty. Only, so to speak, when we articulate the skeleton, we must remember that we are to do it as a preliminary to the "more inviting task of painting the ideal in proportion, line and color."

Therefore, when all has been said about the necessity for right belief, two further words of caution are needed:

First. We must remember that our Blessed Lord always puts the emphasis on believing,

not as a thing in itself, but as something that leads elsewhere. Jesus Christ preached the need of belief only as belief was to issue in life. He did not want a creed that is simply a fine-spun philosophy. He did not want hairbreadth distinctions in theology. What He wanted was a right attitude toward the truth. Not the doctrine insisted upon for its own sake; but a right faith as leading to a right life. Not a creed to be crammed down men's throats; but a creed which we translate into action. Belief is not a bare acceptance of facts; it is an *atmosphere*; it surrounds us; we live in it; we breathe it. It is a real faith only when it becomes the background of all our thought. It must give color to all our conduct. Everything we do must be different because of it. It must make us do what otherwise we would not do. It is not dogma; it is life.

You may go to church and hear a course of lectures on Church history which will all the while be giving you lessons for life. You may listen to an exposition of the Apostles' creed and discover that the skeleton can be covered, and the dry bones of theology made to live. I believe in God—what does it mean but that I see over the universe a Moral Governor and realize that I must acknowledge His will as the moral law of conduct? I believe in God the Father—what is it but that I know there is

Some One who cares, who loves me and wants a return for His love? I believe in Jesus Christ His Son, who for our sakes became man—what is it but that I recognize that all men are brethren in Him; what but that I see a new and inefaceable relation between man and man; what but that I see in every man, white or black, good or bad, saint or sinner, some likeness to Him? I believe in the Holy Spirit—what does it mean but that I know that God is nigh as well as far off, closer than breathing, nearer than hands or feet? I believe in the Holy Trinity—what have I said but that I find in the Godhead a heavenly pattern of a social life on earth, with divine Persons made one through a moral living in and for each other, in a mutual devotion such as serves as an example for men?

So we carry our creed into our daily walk. It becomes an inspiration to right conduct. It gives a foundation to morality. It furnishes the why and wherefore of a goodness and righteousness that shall follow us all the days of our life.

Then, second. As Jesus Christ taught that creed makes character, so, conversely, He taught that character makes creed. "He that willeth to do My will shall know of the doctrine." The ultimate test of a human life is not how much faith one has, but how much faith one has used. We must live true to the truth as we see it:

we must will to do His will. Even if we cannot adequately define Christ, or our belief about Him, the really important thing is to follow Him. "The vital requirement of religion is obedience to the known will of God." Are there things you cannot believe? Well, what about the other half that you do believe? What are you doing with that? What are you making of it? How are you using it?

And then the significant thing is, that the truth you live becomes larger truth. You act on a germ of faith and it grows and expands; the seed becomes a tree. We often fancy that faith somehow comes out of thought and is the result of logical processes. Not at all! What really happens is that the practical attempt to live according to our present light turns out to be the way in which we find more light. He that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine. If you seriously try to follow Christ, you cannot fail to know Him.

Is it not so? If for one day we should live exactly as Christ would, were He in our position; do exactly what He would do; say only the things He would say; banish every thought that could not by any possibility find place in His mind—how soon our doubts would all dissolve, and our difficulties vanish, and the way be made plain, and the truth possess our souls.

X

CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

ST. PAUL has been called, half in jest, half in earnest, the Apostle to the Protestants. They seem willing to leave St. Peter to the Romanists, presumably because he is the keeper of the keys, but St. Paul is all their own. It is easy to understand why. He is the apostle of freedom; the challenger of an outgrown faith; the zealous propagandist of a new religion; the keen expounder of its doctrine—the embodiment of the very spirit of the Reformation. So they feel; but, most of all, they hail him as a consistent preacher of personal religion, a devoted follower of Christ whose constant prayer is that he “may be found in Him.”

And they are quite right thus far.

But with St. Paul “personal religion” is not mere individualism. One by one we must surrender to Christ; one by one place ourselves under His influence. He “loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*” and I must accept Him as my Saviour and my Guide. All that, of course. But when one by one we have come to Christ,

we are not to be left loose and unattached; if we have read the story aright, individual fellowship is safeguarded as it becomes merged in corporate fellowship.

It was this conception of Christ's eternal purpose which brought back to the historic Church the pastor of the City Temple, Dr. R. J. Campbell, to whose "Spiritual Pilgrimage" reference was made in an earlier chapter. He had come to see that something must be done to rescue modern Christianity from "the calamitous error that it is only a set of views to be promulgated—and a more or less incoherent and unstable set of views at that." Christianity, as he finally began to feel, after deep and prayerful consideration, was a life to be lived in corporate fellowship—fellowship with another and higher world than that of our own perceptions. That our Lord did mean to found a visible society, he felt, was obvious to an impartial reader of Christ's recorded words and from the sense in which those words were always understood and acted upon by the early disciples. Dr. Campbell was really recalling the Protestant Christianity of to-day to the faith of the great apostle. That was St. Paul's central thought—the very heart and soul of all his theology.

So St. Paul is a great Churchman. What an enthusiastic belief in the Church he had! What

a glorious thing his conception of the Church was! How he insists that our Lord meant us to be one in a visible fellowship! The religion of Jesus Christ is to be embodied in a society—the Church, which is His Body—and “that society, one and undivided, is to go out into the world conquering and to conquer.” It is difficult to understand, therefore, how Christians can be content with a religion that omits “the Church idea.” And yet they are. There is to-day a more general desire than ever before to be of use in the world; but unquestionably there is, along with it, an equally conspicuous fact, the growing neglect of religious institutions. There is not a growing indifference to religion, but there is an indifference to church ordinances, a neglect of church privileges, carelessness about church worship and membership, even hostility to the Church. It is hard to understand.

Unless it be the fault of the Church itself. Is it? Let us see what the man outside says.

Here is one accuser: “The Church has made the great mistake of confounding respectability and morality with holiness. That is what makes us think that Jesus Christ would not feel very much at home in our churches to-day, and that He would slip away, as He did of old, to sup with those who did not pretend to be good at all, and yet were simpler and more generous

and more able to understand Him than the men who thought themselves good. What are the tests the churches put for trying and sifting the chaff from the wheat? The test of orthodoxy—whether one believes the creeds. The test of respectability—whether one obeys the laws and the conventions of society. The test of loyalty—whether one attends certain services or not. The test of clothes—whether one has a Sunday suit. The tests are all wrong. But they explain why the Church fails to reach the masses.”

And here is another: “The Church does not touch human life. At the bottom of this separation from life is what a modern philosopher has called the passivity, drowsy devotion and blind obedience which religious people think is religion. They indulge in the worship of God only to secure promises and favors, not in order to get to God that they may become better and more active men in life.”

And finally: “The reason of the failure of the Church to reach men is that church people have become so engrossed in maintaining their own interests that Christianity, which is the religion of humanity, has become a religion of a sect or sects.”

To sum it all up: There is a growing dissatisfaction with Church Christianity. It seems to so many people to be narrow and sectarian. It is

so divided that it fails to make a definite impression on society. It has made religion something to be labelled and bottled and prescribed for use on certain occasions, instead of a dynamic that shall move the world. Men are calling the Church back to Christ.

Ah! it is so much easier to criticise than to correct. What would the world be, if all church organizations were swept out of existence to-morrow? Imperfect they are, of course, but imperfect as organized Christianity is, it is still the greatest single power for good the world has ever seen or dreamed of. To help the Church fulfil its mission is a better thing than to stand outside and complain. Whatever its faults, it is the chief institution in the world that labors persistently and definitely for righteousness. If it does not stand for all that you would like to have it represent, it is your business to get inside and make it rise to new ideals.

That we say, first; and then, second: If the man outside calls the Church back to Christ, the Church bids him remember that he needs a corporate religion to keep him close to the Christ he has found. Christ must be your strength as well as your pattern and guide. In worship, and in worship only, will you renew your strength, and the Church is a household of grace, not merely an association of believers. I venture to

say that the man who forgets this will inevitably lose his grip on great spiritual realities. His enthusiasm will wane; he will see his duty less clearly; he will be less sensitive to the distinction between the better and the best, more often discouraged or else more easily satisfied with self. The Church's call is really an offer of power. It is your business to worship as well as work, to get strength in prayer and sacrament; in united service to pass on a little of your enthusiasm to the other man; perhaps, oftener than you think, to catch some inspiration from him. That is the reason Christ's ideal for Christianity was a corporate ideal. The Church is not the afterthought of men; it is the forethought of Christ. If men have made it less than He meant it to be, surely you who desire to follow Him will not desert the organization He established; you will join in and help. If Christ thought it worth while to found a Church, it is worth while for you to try to bring it up to His ideal.

That brings us back to the vital question: Did or did not Christ Himself found a Church? If He did leave it behind Him as an organized society, then it is our duty to be within its fold, no matter how poorly it is doing the work He established it for, no matter how many people stay out, no matter who else may be in, and

however their lives may fail to square with their profession.

When we go "back to Christ," then, what shall we find? Nothing less than that test will satisfy us. Church membership may be convenient—we feel that organization is useful in Christian work as in everything else. Such membership may be expedient—it is a practical way of showing the world my personal acceptance of Christ. It may be helpful—in common worship I renew my strength. On the other hand, I may feel that none of these reasons is valid. As a matter of fact, even if I do believe them to be valid, they are often inconclusive for others. They do not go to the heart of the matter.

After all, my real reason for belonging to the Church must go back to Christ Himself. If I belong, I must belong because I feel that He commanded or desired it. If He did not regard it as of prime importance; if He made it no essential part of His teaching; indeed, if it did not so largely occupy His thought as to appear to be a vital and integral part of His scheme of redemption—then I am not obliged to give it any large place in my own thought. It is merely a matter of preference, of likes and dislikes, of personal inclination and adaptability; simply a question of practical usefulness. I may belong to the Church or not, as I choose.

There is a picture of our Lord which will never lose its abiding beauty. Crowds of the poor flock to Him for comfort and help, multitudes of the sick press upon Him to be healed, the distressed and heavy laden come to Him for relief, and He receives them all so tenderly and graciously! So simply and beautifully does He explain spiritual things, that men cannot but be drawn to Him, cannot but love Him, cannot but long to be like Him. Because He is such a Master, one has a feeling that the moment we try to organize all this into a system, we have begun to rob the Gospel of its primitive purity and sweet simplicity; that moment the charm of the picture is gone.

But, as Scott Holland reminds us, when we study the picture clearly we see something else. There is a deeper purpose, an inner motive, that is always in the mind of Christ, a motive that was revealed at first only to the inner circle of His disciples, and to them only little by little. He came to suffer and to die, not merely that men might be drawn to Him as individuals, but that they might be knit together and organized into a body through the power of His risen life. He would be alone as much as possible with the Twelve. He must have time to train them. He is trying to make them understand something which the others cannot take in. Towards that

He bends all His energy. He tests them—"Will you also go away?" He tries them again and again, and at last the time seems ripe and He asks them the momentous question, "Whom say ye that I am?" When St. Peter answers with splendid faith, the heart of the Master beats with delight and quick relief. At last they see! At last He can do what was in His mind all the while! At last His plan is under way and His purpose can be fulfilled. Now He has material for building! "Thou art Peter (the Rock Man) and upon this Rock (of faith like thine) I will build My Church."

Yes, this was the purpose of His life. Not simply to do the little good that could be done in those few brief years, in one tiny corner of the globe, but to plant a seed which should be fruitful in service for all the centuries; to train a band of men who would understand what His sacrifice meant and read aright the meaning of His life as well as of His death, and would organize a Church through which that life should be made known, in which that death could be pleaded, by which that teaching could be perpetuated. All the rest follows naturally now. The apostles receive their final call. He "breathes on them and ordains them" to go out—to preach? Yes, but also to baptise; to admit to a society; to perpetuate their ministry by the

ordination of others; to extend it by the establishment of new orders, deacons and presbyters; to organize a kingdom. Surely these men who were so close to Christ could not have misunderstood His purpose. They knew the mind of the Master.

That is the reason St. Paul is so strong a Churchman. For him the Church is what it was to his Lord, a matter of vital necessity, a household of grace into which men come through the sacrament of life and in which they are strengthened by the food of the soul. The Church is the very Body of Christ; and we are members of that Body, of His flesh and of His bones. As our own bodies have many members, each with its own office, and all joined in living union, so we are members of the Body of Christ, each called into His Church for some particular work, each admitted into the closest union with Him Who is the Head.

The thought is not St. Paul's; he received it from his Lord, who had used just as strong a figure when He said, "I am the Vine; ye are the branches." As the branches are in the vine, so that the sap flows out into them, and through them to the leaves, quickening and freshening the youngest shoot, so we are grafted into Christ.

The thought, given by our Lord, developed in

another figure by St. Paul, is to be traced, as was just indicated, in the action of the apostles. When men believed they were baptised, and being baptised they became members of an organized body. "The Lord added to the Church daily such as were being saved." They would love Him and serve Him, and they must have His life bestowed upon them for the quickening and strengthening of their faltering purpose.

That is what makes the Church idea so glorious. If the Church were nothing more than a convenience—on the whole a very satisfactory method of securing unity of Christian purpose—there would be no compelling motive for becoming a Church member. With St. Paul and the early Christians—rather, with our Lord Himself—it was more than that; not a matter of expediency, but a matter of vital necessity. Why? Because the Church is an organism, not merely an organization; a divine society, not simply a human association. The Church is the body of which Christ is the head. It is no "amorphous aggregate of individual souls, each with its own special and direct relation to the living Head, but standing in no relationship to the rest"; rather, it is a growing organism, a society indwelt by Christ, a body through which the current of His life flows, to be shared by all who become part of it.

We have gone "back to Christ," and in going

we have found some forgotten truths which He taught. The Church—we repeat it by way of emphasis—is the forethought of Christ, not an afterthought of men.

Yet there are those questionings of the man outside. We cannot brush them aside. They reveal an intense dissatisfaction with the Church as it is to-day, divided and weak, nerveless and impotent, suffering from a terrible blight, the blight of Sunday religion. What are we to do about it? Give it all up? Substitute our own plan for Christ's? Or make our belief more vital by basing it on Christ's eternal purpose? Believe in the Church as He meant it to be, not in churches men have made; enlarge the idea of what the Church is for; enrich our conception of sacraments and worship?

The trouble with the average Church member to-day is that "his religion carries no atmosphere, no courage, no conviction; it is hesitating, impotent, unsaving." So writes a devoted priest who has raised his "standard of revolt" to call the Church back to its Lord. And a Christian layman, who has written one of the keenest of recent interpretations of the thought of "the man outside," with sympathy for his dissatisfaction and something of impatience that the average Churchman cannot see his real ground of complaint, has said much the same thing.

He is the accuser of the Church first quoted; but he is none the less the champion of the Church idea: "The Church is the Body of Christ," he says. "At the centre the great heart of Christ still beats strongly, pumping the life-giving blood into the veins of the different members; but unfortunately the valves are choked up, the blood cannot circulate freely, the members fail to work in harmony with each other, and many seem numb and dead."

The remedy lies not in abandoning Christ's ideal. It lies in seeking, through loving fellowship with our brother Christians, to try loyally to embody Christ's ideal. His work is to be our work, His spirit our spirit, His plan ours. In it is power and love and life—all ours, if we will.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF
CHRIST'S GOSPEL

XI

THE OLD GOSPEL AND THE NEW RELIGION

THE Church, with its conception of a corporate Christianity, is the bond that ties the Old Gospel to the New Religion. Church Christianity, in its very genius, is a social religion. The Church's gospel is the gospel of the kingdom. It is perfectly true that the Kingdom of God is within us. There Christ is enthroned instead of Self; but Christ is there, in order that "we may form part of that great society which is potentially the Kingdom of God on earth." When the Church begins to realize its social character, men will no longer hold aloof from its communion; for they will find in it initiative and enthusiasm.

Our problem is to make the Church itself see that the very purpose of its being is not merely that it may hold the believer, but that it may save the world.

Church people, despite occasional sneers from without, are really religious people. Only they are very conservative. It has been said that

many of them sum up their creed in the words of the latter half of the Gloria Patri: "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be." To make them see the new social vision, therefore, requires much patience. Why worry about that? Once they have grasped the new truth they will, just because of their innate conservatism, grip it very firmly and stand solid in their new faith.

Patience the task of the social reformer certainly does demand. He will always be finding it necessary to go back to fundamentals; he must ever be stressing again and again things which seem to him elementary. For one thing, he will be constantly confronted with the assertion that what is needed in the Church is the preaching of the old gospel. No one who has read this book will have failed to see that it was written with the purpose of showing the wonder and the romance of that gospel. It has failed in its object if it has not quickened some reader to a fuller faith in our Lord and a deeper devotion to His service.

Only—the plea that the Church must preach the old gospel is true or false according to what the phrase connotes. It is a false plea if it means the *limitation* of Christian activity and influence, if the gospel is to be made the message of a past age, without practical application to present needs and conditions. In that sense it

is a false plea, whether it come from those who dread the light lest their deeds be reproved or whether it be the cry of conscientious conservatism.

Yet we do need the old gospel. Mere social effort or philanthropic service, without the inspiration, motive force and sustaining power of a deep religious faith, will never meet the needs of human life. There will always, therefore, be a place and part for personal religion. We must never so exalt social service as to create a suspicion, difficult to put into words, which, indeed, we do not always clearly formulate for ourselves, a suspicion that social zeal is in some way hostile to spiritual culture, is in rivalry with the inner growth of the soul.

We need the old gospel, but it must bring its old message into living touch with the new problems of modern life. The social message of the gospel is not a denial of the value of the old faith or a neglect of the old religion. Rather it is an attempt to put the old truth in a new setting; to restate old truths for a new age.

That is what the world craves. Too often, to the man outside, the Church seems to be holding itself aloof from the things which are vitally moving men. The Church seems to be tremendously exercised over smaller things and to be passive about the crying needs of humanity.

Its preachers are harmlessly theoretical or aseptically individualistic. The average sermon is a nice little moral essay, and the average church member is content to have it so.

The "man in the street" very likely cannot express what he feels, but he has an instinctive belief that this kind of Christianity is not what Christ or the apostles taught. If he does try to formulate his thought, he sees that Jesus was very definite about the sins of the society of His day; he knows that John the Baptist was martyred because he fearlessly put his finger on such sins and boldly rebuked vice; he sees that Christ Himself suffered the same fate and for the same reason; he reads back into the Old Testament and discovers that the prophets were forthtellers as well as foretellers, great preachers of righteousness who at whatever cost brought a message to the people of their own day; he reads forward into apostolic history and sees St. Paul reasoning very definitely and specifically about righteousness and temperance and judgment to come, and though there is no full report of the argument he suspects that it did not deal in generalities.

And the man outside wants a religion as vibrant as that for our own day. He feels that if the voice of the preacher is silent about the things that have to do with this present world he will

not long be listened to as he proclaims a gospel of future good, the peace and joy of a world to come.

Somewhere I have seen it stated in this way: "In almost every period of the world's life there are movements of thought and feeling that may be called glacial. They are widespread; they cannot be resisted; they leave their mark on the whole region they traverse. Such a movement of thought and feeling there is now. A great wave of brotherhood is sweeping over the world. Social workers everywhere are giving the movement expression. A great impulse is moving men with the desire to correct the ills of society and heal the scars of competitive cruelty." The Socialist preaching on the street corner is giving voice to this passionate longing. If religion is to make itself deeply felt, it must ally itself with the movement of the age, infuse into it Christ's spirit, save it from exaggeration, distortion, and excess. We must Christianize the social order and socialize the Christian order. "Our preachers must be prophets of their own time, or they will not reach their highest effectiveness. The great need of the age is for men with the spirit of the Lord upon them, who will have the courage and the consecration to guide the social movement along deeply religious lines." They must, with wisdom and with fearlessness,

apply the principles of the old gospel to the conditions of our modern social and industrial life. Back of every economic and industrial question lies, often, a moral question. The Church is the guardian of morals. Surely, therefore, it is the duty of its ministers and its members to concern themselves about the solution of these problems. Indeed, we *must* so concern ourselves, or there will come upon us before we have been aroused to the danger a revolution of the most gigantic proportions, ruinous in its results.

There are prophets of the new era who see this clearly.

Nor can they feel that the duty is one which concerns merely the individual. They believe that the Church in its corporate capacity should in some way show the restless masses of men that they have no better friends than the disciples of Him whose glory it was to preach good tidings to the poor. Most of them feel that it is not the duty of the Church or its ministers to formulate economic schemes or to make up social programmes. Our duty is to inspire the individual for service; to make men think and pray and work. But it is far better to err in zeal than to have the world accept a theory that the Church as a body has nothing to do with political and secular matters. Indeed, there are no merely secular problems; to the Christian there is no

sharply drawn line between the secular and the religious. To hear the complacent comment of the self-satisfied in praise of a Church "which does not meddle with a man's religion or politics" is at the same time to see somewhere in the background the smile of the unbeliever or the reproach of the earnest student of affairs who realizes only too sadly that in the case of the man who makes the comment his faith probably never has made any decided change in the principles by which his life is guided.

What then, in brief, is the social gospel? First, it started anew as a gospel of prevention. That is the meaning of the institutional church, with its boys' clubs, its girls' friendly societies, its gymnasium and entertainment hall. That is the meaning of settlement houses and children's playgrounds and workingmen's clubs and community dance halls. They safeguard from sin, instead of waiting to save from sin afterward. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Instead of waiting to save the soul when sin has done its work, the gospel of prevention seeks to protect the soul against sin's entrance. It therefore concerns itself not only with the individual, but with all conditions that surround and affect individuals.

Because this responsibility is becoming more and more widely recognized, institutional work is

being more largely taken over by the community. The institutional church will, therefore, become less necessary. As its work is taken over by other agencies, the Church's attitude towards it will become inspirational. It will guide what it no longer directly controls.

Second, the new religion next saw that it is futile to deal with individuals only. In a broader way than through institutional work it must prepare for the individual the right environment. Therefore, the social gospel concerns itself with community problems—the drink evil, the social evil, the care of the subnormal, the reformation of the criminal, the matter of sex hygiene, the political entanglements which so closely ally the saloon and the social evil with community government, the economic and political programmes of the industrial democracy.

Great problems, moral as well as economic, lie back of every reform movement. Is everybody to study these problems *except* the minister? And shall everybody speak of them *except* the Church? To be sure, there are reformers whose indiscretions arouse the wrath of the righteous, afford the ungodly much glee and make the angels weep; but it has never been an axiom in religion that the foolishness of some preaching need necessarily make all preachers hold their peace and refrain even from good words.

Even from the selfish viewpoint the community welfare concerns the Christian. It may touch his own home and his own kindred very closely. What good would it do in a selfish way to guard our children from scarlet fever or diphtheria if we allowed the disease to ravage the rest of the city with no quarantine established? In like manner the moral health of the individual is never truly safeguarded, if the moral health of the community be neglected.

Third, the social gospel brought a message for the industrial and business world. The new righteousness is a protest against a new form of sin. We may call it sin at long range. In a simpler age men could sin only by one and one. In a sense that is still true; but it is not so clearly seen under complex modern conditions, when many a business man who is kind and generous in his personal life and is an honest Christian believer, is yet responsible for corporate conditions that belie his Christianity. Such a man would never dream of the possibility of his being a murderer, yet without taking the trouble to know of his responsibility he may have stock in a factory or interest in property where flagrant violations of sanitary laws are daily sacrificing innocent life. He is strictly honest in his personal dealings, but he may never have stopped to inquire about the methods by

which some corporation of which he is an officer has secured its franchise and property rights. Perhaps (still worse) he has known all about it, but has never had pressed home his own responsibility and his own guilt. He sins at long range.

The social gospel is making men see their social sins. Unless it be preached insistently, so that they do see and reform, there are forces at work in society which will punish them with avenging wrath.

This, then, is the old gospel for the new age. Some people resent it. They do not like, for example, to be told that as Christians they must take their stand and make their sacrifices for civic righteousness. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and it is disquieting to have the conscience too sharply pricked and to be compelled to consider their sources of revenue. There are perils of respectability of which even conscientiously conservative people do not like to be reminded. It all makes them uncomfortable. It always makes people uncomfortable to be obliged to face unpleasant facts. They resent it.

Well, many people resented the old gospel when it pointed out the individual sins of men during the Evangelical revival a century ago. It was Lord Melbourne, was it not, who stamped

out of church in a rage at one of the new kind of preachers of that day. "Religion has come to a pretty pass," he said, "when it is made to invade the sphere of private life."

Yet the years have shown how absurd it was to suppose that it was not the business of religion to invade private life. And the years that are coming will show no less plainly that if faith is to be vital it must invade every sphere of human activity. The new religion is not new at all. It is the old religion in a new guise. Social righteousness is just Christianity translated into modern terms.

XII

STAINED-GLASS SAINTS—AND OTHERS

“Not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” That was what our Lord prayed for—not that we should have an environment destitute of temptation, but that we should have grace and strength to attain holiness amid temptation.

What is a Christian life? The preceding chapters have been an attempt to picture its background of faith and devotion; but how does it manifest itself in the world? It is worth while to ask and try to answer the question, because most people have a rather vague conception of what a truly religious life ought to be, and being somewhat hazy in their theory they are not very definite or consistent in their practice.

St. Paul called all the members of the Church “saints.” It would seem the height of absurdity now if I were to write a letter to the “saints” of any particular congregation—meaning everybody. Yet that is just what St. Paul did, because with him a “saint” meant one who was

called to be holy, not one who had already attained holiness. We limit the term. Called to be saints? Why, we picture the Christian life as a lofty and unworldly ideal utterly beyond attainment by plain people like ourselves. And having so very unworldly (and, as we suppose, lofty) a conception of it, we put it entirely out of the realm of possible practical accomplishment and think no more about it.

Now our Lord Christ meant religion to be a very simple and natural thing. Not an easy thing—we shall see in a moment that it is not that—but a natural thing. It was to develop out of every-day surroundings. It was to be the sanctification of common occupations. It was to be the hallowing of the usual and the ordinary and the commonplace. Therefore it was to be something possible for plain, every-day people in plain, every-day circumstances. We need not leave the world behind and flee to other worlds, we need not give up the interests and concerns of this life and its relationships and affections, we need not steel our hearts against its attractions, in order to be saints of God.

It is a singular thing, as the late Dr. Dale said, that those who reject the mediæval theology nevertheless cling to the mediæval idea of saintliness. We can hardly think of a man as being a saint unless he is some one for whom this

present world has no attraction or charm. He must not take satisfaction in any pleasure except the joys of worship. Every-day occupations, to him, are only hindrances to communion with God. He is very placid and quiet and subdued. If we are to be quite certain about his saintliness, he should be a little thin and pale; not too strong, certainly not hale and hearty and robust. Everybody knows the figure; the saint of the stained-glass window, "with wasted form, and transparent hands, and thin, pale face, and eyes heavy with tears or weary with watching."

It is not less singular that, though we accept the mediæval idea of saintliness, we will have none of it for ourselves, and it doesn't meet the test when we find it embodied in people we know. As a matter of fact, the "good" people who come nearest the type are the ones we usually like to avoid as much as possible. We feel that

To live with the saints in heaven
Is bliss, indeed, and glory.
To live with the saints on earth
Is—quite another story!

We could not be that kind of a saint, if we would; and we would not be, if we could; and therefore we give up trying to be any kind of a saint at all.

We make something of the same mistake in

our conception of what a clergyman should be. We are a little doubtful of him if he is too "good company." Secretly the men like him, or at any rate are not uncomfortable when he is around; but there is a haunting suspicion that he is too much like themselves. We are a little bit shocked if he lacks a certain serenity of temper and aloofness of manner, a gentleness of speech, perhaps even a delicacy of physique. If he happens to be a man of another sort; with plenty of muscle and color, with a cheerful satisfaction in the pleasures of life, a man who loves to dine with his friends and eats his full share of the dinner, who lives a cheery family life, has a wife and children, has hearty human friendships and also hearty human prejudices, has his likes and dislikes, his little faults and failings, yet withal is very likable as he is very human—we wonder whether he has not missed his calling. The men say it is a pity that he did not go into business. The children like him; but they are apt to forget, till it is too late, that he is a minister. The women think of him as attractive and pleasant; but never as a saint and a man of holiness. They wonder, too, whether he ought to be just that kind of a man since he is in the sacred ministry.

Of course he ought. He is a good minister of the religion of Jesus Christ. If they but knew

it, he is a good example of just the kind of men and women they should be. They have set up for him an unnatural standard, and they forget that there is not one kind of holiness for the clergy and another kind for the laity. Indeed, they forget that holiness is demanded of all who are in the Body of Christ. They do not realize that the real reason they have never tried hard to be saints themselves is just because, in the back of their heads, they know that they do not admire the kind of saintliness that they have supposed they ought to admire. The human, likable, lovable man of whose ministerial calling they are doubtful, is really summoning them to be saints too. Without becoming stained-glass window Christians, we can all of us be good soldiers and servants of Jesus Christ. We can be good without ceasing to be natural. Above all, we can be good without being miserable. The world needs not merely saints of the cloister, but saints of the hearth.

Yet it doesn't make religion easy to put it that way. It is no easy thing to live like Christ in every-day life. Monday morning Christianity has always been harder to live than Sunday morning Christianity. Yet religion between Sundays is the only religion that can indeed be the religion of Jesus Christ. He is the Christ who came down from heaven and lived here in the

world; dwelt in a home in Nazareth; worked at a carpenter's bench; met with all kinds of people; and therefore His religion—the religion of the Incarnation—means the sanctifying of common life. It is no easy thing to do that. You have only to ask the man in business whether it is or not, to get from him a straight answer. But I fancy it is just as hard for his wife at home to find a glory in the dull round of daily duties or to give a sacredness to the petty routine of domestic management as it is for him to be a Christ-bearer in the office and the shop.

It is not easy; but it is infinitely worth while. And it is a splendidly attractive and fascinating ideal. The cloistered religion can never, in general, be so great an ideal to work for. That is the reason so many people view the monastic life as a cowardly running away from temptation. It is not that. It is simply another ideal—a true vocation for some, if combined with the thought of service; but not a general vocation and certainly not a higher vocation. The “normal” Christian is the Christian whose religion changes his environment instead of driving him out of it.

No, the ideal is not easy; nor is it always likely to be understood. Our Lord Himself faced constant misunderstanding because He made it His rule of life. People called Him a gluttonous man

and a winebibber. They probably said other things that hurt worse than that. Yet the ideal has never lost its charm as exemplified in His life. For that *was* His life. There is a great deal of truth in Renan's picture of our Lord, in its emphasis on the joyousness and *verve* of His early ministry, His eager delight in life, His frank and alert interest in the common affairs of common people, His love of nature, His animation, His buoyancy of spirit, His thorough enjoyment of pleasant things. Somebody has said that no one who wanted a wedding to pass off cheerfully would have urged John the Baptist to be the chief guest; but it was the most natural thing in the world that Jesus should always have been welcome. He had a disposition, a manner, a temperament, full of joy and brightness and sunshine. Though life was very serious for Him, and the shadows lengthened toward the end, and He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet He never lost a healthy, hopeful, sane outlook on life. He always had friends, and one feels that He needed them, not simply that they needed Him. He attracted men by His life as well as by His teaching. He won them by what He was as well as by what He did. People were never afraid of Him, that is, not as a friend and companion. Some, indeed, objected that He was too much of a "diner-out"; His enemies called

Him a gluttonous man and a winebibber; but nevertheless in Him wisdom was justified of her children.

“Not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world; but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” It gives us the right idea of Christian holiness—the sanctification of common life, the hallowing of common tasks; religion incarnated in life, even as Christ our Lord brought down the divine to manifest it through the human. But the words lead us also to right ideas about the Christian Church and its task. For a long time the Church preached a religion for the other world, not a religion for this. She tried to prepare men for death and sometimes forgot to prepare them for life. She spent so much time setting men’s feet in the road that leads to heaven, that she had no time to look at the country through which the road passed.

Now, of course, there is an “other worldliness” which the Church must never fail to hold before the eyes of the men of this world. There is a life of prayer and worship and communion without which we cannot face the evils of this present time. We need to learn again and again that in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength. The mistake the fathers made was in regarding “devotions” as the be-all and end-all of religion. It was the mistake of the religious orders. They

left the world to find God and never went back to the world to bring Him to others when they had found Him. To-day the monastic ideal is different. Men and women go aside to be alone with God, and then when their souls are all on fire with the divine message—then through service or sermon, through pastoral work or human ministrations, they try to communicate the flame to others. Their “other-worldliness” makes another world of this.

But the lesson goes deeper. It is this: that Christ is found without going away at all to seek for Him. He is here, and He becomes real to the Church or the individual who tries to find Him in the person of His brethren. Therefore the Church must be interested in man’s life here as well as in man’s life hereafter. Jesus Christ “went about doing good”; it was His wish and purpose to make men happy now as well as hereafter; the sight of hunger moved Him to pity; sickness “drew virtue out of Him”; He was interested in all that entered into men’s daily life (His parables are drawn from the common scenes and the every-day occurrences of that life); He pointed men toward the heaven He had made possible for them, but He also gave them a taste of heaven here. So Christianity is interested in all that can make earth more like heaven, just as Jesus Christ was in-

terested in bringing back into harmony with the beautiful Galilean country which He loved all the sad and sick and suffering folk He met by the way.

The Church Christianity of to-day therefore is a life of service "in this present world." The clergy are concerned about the clothes their people wear, the food they eat, the wages they earn, the pleasures they have, the houses they live in. The clergy do not pray to be delivered from all these things—to be taken out of the world. They find their inspiration and their joy in bringing Christ into a world that needs His presence, ah, so much more than we realize. And the churches which the clergy serve and the individual men and women to whom they minister—if *they* catch the spirit of the religion of the incarnate Christ, they build settlement houses and equip playground centres and support hospitals and sanatoria, and erect parish houses as well as churches and hold classes in manual training and physical exercise as well as Bible-classes. And they do all this, not in a spirit of complacent kindness and condescending philanthropy; but in a spirit of simple brotherliness, because the needs of the human family demand it. Most of all, they do it in the spirit of co-operation, not giving only, but getting; knowing that the men and women

they help can teach them as much as they are taught; desiring to work shoulder to shoulder as children of the same Father. Through it all, appreciating the glory of a religion that does not take us out of the world, but protects us from the evil; more than that, makes us strong to remove the evil itself.

If more and more we find work of that sort taken up by societies and individuals outside of the Church, it should make us pause and ask whether we have been missing the opportunity given us by Him whom the common people loved and heard gladly. It may mean instead, not that the churches have lost their grip, but that the world is becoming more Christian—only, let us be certain that the Church's progress in Christianity at least keeps pace with the world's advance.

And here, when all is said, we get back to our starting place. We are all called to be saints—only we are to be natural flowers in God's garden, not hothouse plants. If you have money you need not give it all away and flee to the cloister; you can stay in the world and use it for God. (The terrible temptation of wealth is to use it for self; how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom!) If you have flowers, see that some go to the hospitals and the sick neighbors. If you have an automobile, put it at your rector's

disposal now and then for some of the sick poor. If you are in society, you need not stay away from dinners and social gatherings: go and try hard to take God's goodness and God's sunshine with you. If you can have beautiful gowns, think a little of the woman who makes them. When you shop, try really to know the girl on the other side of the counter; treat her as a sister, not a woman to whom you may be condescendingly kind. If you are a man, remember that your business should bear the divine inspection. Sometimes you will feel that religion and business cannot mix; it would be easier to run away and leave the world and its problems; it would be easier still to make your life a compartment thing, with partitions that carefully keep religion to itself and weekday work by itself. Only that is not Christ's ideal. He wants you to be His disciple "in this present world." And you *can* be. We can all be saints, we men and women—in the office, at home, at the theatre, at the opera, in society, at the ball game—if only we realize that this is our calling, and that God gives grace for its fulfilment.

That is what St. Paul meant. Holiness is something to which all, alike, are called; which all, alike, therefore can attain. We can reach the goal, if only we make sure that we see in which direction it lies. Or, to put it another way,

we must remember that the Christian life consists not in a change of locality but in a change of heart. Our deliverance from sin to holiness is to be affected, not by the removal of the body, but by the reinforcement of the soul.

XIII

CHRISTIAN IDEALS IN BUSINESS

IF anywhere the signs are hopeful that the religion of Jesus Christ is at last moving out into life and establishing the kingdom of righteousness for which we pray, it is in the world of business. There is a decided change of tone in recent literature on the subject. Change of ownership and control and a growing realization that people have tired of "muckraking" may in part be responsible for this; but that does not altogether explain the changed attitude of popular editorial preachers. There are really encouraging indications that there has been a great Christian awakening in commercial life—and this despite the fact that in the past two years of unprecedented prosperity America has faced greater temptations of materialism than ever before in its history. We have no call to be pessimists.

Many of us can remember back not so many years to the time when it was quietly assumed that religion and business had nothing to do with each other. Of course it was conceded that a

man ought to be religious. There was a feeling that "a gentleman should no more discard religion than he should be without a dress coat and a silk hat." But religion was distinctly an affair of private life. In business it was an intrusion and an impertinence. People generally had what we have already named as a sort of "compartment" idea of religion. It was quietly taken for granted that a different standard ruled the world on Sunday. Some of us can distinctly call to mind certain customs in the way of allowances for the entertainment of out-of-town customers which business houses at least winked at—a thing which we fancy would be rather differently regarded now.

The whole tone and temper of business, moreover, was penetrated with the assumption that it was a game. You played it skilfully and not too scrupulously. You were not likely to be over-successful if you were too strict about adhering even to the elementary rules of the game. In private business one did not expect to get orders until somebody had been "seen"; in certain kinds of corporate business it was taken for granted that there was absolute need of a "yellow dog fund," or something that corresponded to it.

Now, all that has changed—or is changing; we cannot quite put it in the past tense with

some recent entertaining revelations in mind. The change dated from about the time of the Armstrong insurance investigation in New York. It received a great impetus when the Burns disclosures in San Francisco revealed the depths of civic corruption to which such an attitude on the part of business led. It must not be supposed that the present situation is altogether aseptic. Men still occasionally do things of which their consciences cannot approve—but at least their consciences are not silent. They see the inconsistency. They have even come to see that in the long run honesty (or, rather, honor) is the “best policy”; that the corporation or the business man who is always straight has in that known fact a tremendous asset.

So there are some things which are fundamental upon which it is no longer necessary to enlarge. The whole tone of trade journals, the very atmosphere of “Ad Club” conventions—these have changed in recent years. The “Ad Clubs” in their national gatherings send their best men as lay preachers to the pulpits of the city, whenever they get a chance; and whatever good their somewhat platitudinous preachments do the congregations, there is no doubt they have a very decided reflex action on the conventions.

That, then, was the first step. Men no longer do things because they are regarded as inevitable,

and then shrug their shoulders and forget. They have discovered that there is such a thing as the commercial conscience.

Then came the next step. Men began to drop the compartment idea altogether. It is not only that they no longer do what they once did unblushingly and unblinkingly; but they have begun to see that their every-day business is the sphere in which they are really to live their religion.

How St. Francis of Assisi once asked his good brother Leo to go out with him on a preaching tour is an oft-told tale, but it will bear repetition. They passed through villages and towns, talked with the people, stood in the bazaars, watched the children at play, helped a fellow traveller now and then on the road; but there never seemed the opportune time to gather a crowd and exhort them. Finally, after asking several times when the preaching was to begin, Brother Leo grew impatient. "Brother Francis," he asked once more, as they had almost ended their journey and were coming back to their starting point, "when shall we begin to preach?" And St. Francis answered, "Brother Leo, we have been preaching all the while; we preach when we bring God into every-day life."

So with this new spirit in business, the Christian began to see that his workaday world, with

its pressing duties in factory and office and shop, was to be his means of glorifying God. Of course it is not easy. The man in business is often hampered by the conditions of his time. For example, he has to face competition, and because it is very keen and he must bid against it, he finds it hard to keep a high standard. There are some things, for instance, that he would like to do for his employes that he is afraid he cannot do. Many things he would do better if he knew how. The great thing now is that he sees that it is his duty to find out how; and increasingly men are discovering the way, once their eyes are set to see it. That is what accounts for the wholly different attitude with regard to legislation on child labor and other subjects. Everybody hasn't seen the light yet; but once the darkness seemed almost Egyptian, and now the sun has broken through.

Then came a third step. Gradually it has come to be realized that the Christian in business must labor not only for individual righteousness, but for corporate righteousness. It used to be that a man owned stock in a corporation, and so long as he got his dividends it never occurred to him to ask under what conditions the money was earned. Not that he *countenanced* wrong methods; he simply never inquired about them. It was the same with the responsible directors.

Most of them personally were straight, honest, conscientious men. They would have scorned to do the things as individuals which they winked at as officials.

In spite of recent revelations we know that it is different now. The business community is coming to see that corporate righteousness is just as much demanded as individual righteousness. Corporations are beginning to learn that they have, not one soul, but as many souls as they have constituent stockholders. And as they learn it, they are discovering, to their amazement, how much easier it is to do business once they have made the mass of the people see that they are not artificial Frankensteins who were made for nothing but to do evil.

Along with that, they are "hearing the voice of God inquiring for His share in the output" under their management. Socialistic preaching may have frightened some of them into an attentive and listening attitude; it may be that industry is slowly being cleansed of despotism and exploitation for fear of a termination of its lease of power; but it really seems as if the movement were not so selfish as that; it appears to be the growth of a new social conscience that has set men higher than machinery and made human rights more important than property rights. Whether from fear of Socialism, or be-

cause Socialists were prophets of the new era, or because "the right kind of men can make any kind of a system work"—these things we need not inquire into just now. Even the Socialist may find his occupation gone if the leaven works as rapidly in the next decade as it has in the past; and the Socialist is entitled to real credit—but not to all the credit—for the progress that has been won.

That brings us to a fourth step in the progress of business ideals. It is what we may call the human welfare movement. The "safety first" devices are all a part of the new appreciation of human values, not simply good business. The movements for labor exchange and the combining of seasonal occupations; the establishment of state and national labor bureaus, and the starting of similar methods among employers themselves—these are all something more than mere efficiency agencies; they are an indication of a growing appreciation of the fact that there has been some weakness or viciousness in our system, some lack of wisdom or lack of heart in its operation, and that it is our duty to make it less hazardous to be born into this complicated factory of modern life.

And there are some remarkable advances in laws. Child labor has actually been abolished in some states; and we now deem those states

backward, if not semi-barbarous, that have not even begun to curb the evil. Automatic compensation for industrial accidents is in actual operation; and "it works." Hours of labor for women are limited in many states. Law is being humanized. We no longer tolerate the old-fashioned unlimited freedom of contract idea that made real freedom of contract an impossibility. Our courts, slow though some of them have been to learn that laws are intended to stimulate life and not to kill progress, are really trying to adjust old language to new conditions and new ideals. The social picture of the day is not all dark.

Is it too kindly an interpretation of facts to assert that all the social welfare features of modern corporation business are also indications of a new social Christianity? In part, of course, enlightened self-interest demands such social service; for the corporation which treats its employes well will be more than repaid in better service. But it is surely more than that; it is in more cases than we have sometimes recognized, a real desire to do what is right and Christian that has given us better factories, stores and office buildings. At any rate, without erring by drifting into roseate dreams, the facts are there. It is coming to pass that a factory or store is wholly out of date in these days unless it has proper

sanitary arrangements, a rest room for employes, especially women and girls, a decent lunchroom, and if possible an emergency hospital room, opportunities for education and healthful recreation, teachers for the boys and a matron to look after the girls.

In the beginning, of course, these things were provided because it was "good business sense" to take care of the men and women who "make the business"; but in a recent decision of the New York Supreme Court which passed on the expenditure of a million dollars by an insurance company in the erection of a sanatorium for its employes, the proper care of employes in this way was declared to be a moral duty and not merely a legal right. Surely no more significant decision was ever placed in a court record. And surely, despite the slow progress in some localities and the hesitancy of some employers, such *obiter dicta* may preface a wonderful advance in business morality.

When will the last step in this advance be taken? Some of us have been wondering whether the searchings of conscience that have come with commercial problems growing out of the European war may not indicate that there is near at hand a recognition of the significance of our Lord's words, "Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God."

Whether such questionings shall be seen to have the particular application just hinted at, or not, at any rate they mean subordinating business to something higher. They do not, of course, mean that we must be absolutely indifferent to the uses and value of possessions. They mean that we must learn to put first things first. It is the most searching test that can be put to the business men of to-day—even more searching than whether they shall be willing to aid and speed the transition to industrial democracy. To put first things first; the higher before the lower. To take it in its individual application alone, it means that “the Christian business man can never be so much a business man that he has no time to be a good friend and companion, a thoughtful husband and father, a faithful Church member and Church worshipper. He has no right to travel so hard on his nerves that he cannot keep Sunday. He may not work at business to the exclusion of everything else”—unless, in spite of all our advance, he is an employe still driven to it by circumstances beyond his control.

So much as regards individual religion. Where shall we stop? What practical Christian advance shall the lessons of the war bring home to us in their larger reaches? What sacrifices may not yet be demanded—by the enlightened Christian

conscience of the nation—if always we are to put “first things first”? Who can tell? And who shall say that, if the Christian business instinct demand the sacrifice, the day is far distant when men shall not fear to make it?

XIV

THE CHURCH AND THE CITY

THE Bible story, as we have been told more or less frequently, begins with a garden and ends with a city. It is not true that "God made the country and man made the town." God is the maker of town and country alike. The religious ideal of the Bible is a holy city. The nation through which God revealed Himself had its heart in a great city which was "the joy of the whole earth," a city which aroused the spiritual enthusiasm of the Jewish people because it was not merely the centre of the national life but of the national religion. Therefore, when John the Beloved came to describe the heavenly life, it was quite natural that he should have found the source of his imagery in his own city. To him its life was a foretaste of the New Jerusalem come down from God out of heaven.

All this because Christianity is a social Gospel. Some one has said that any other religion may be a matter of God and one's self; but Christianity assumes at least three persons, God, self and a brother man. As our religion deepens, its sphere

of activity broadens and the group enlarges. The sphere of Christian activity is social; its teachings imply all sorts of social duties; its sacraments are social sacraments—and the city is the highest development of social life.

So the city with its problems stands as a challenge to the Church. There we see society in its complexity. There so many things are crowded together, that the very multiplicity of opportunity is a ringing call to service that must awaken and arouse the best that is in us.

What, then, must be the attitude of the Church and of the individual Christian to the city in which he lives?

First, the Christian tries to look at the life of the community with sympathetic insight. As he goes out into the city he does not berate the fate which clouds his sky with the smoke of factories, except as the dust and dirt are unnecessary evils which better laws may correct. He thinks rather of the busy life which these things typify, of the patient workers who are all of them, whether they know it or not, laboring for the common good. So "the hum of the machinery takes on a rhythmic movement, the whirling wheels are music, the curling smoke the incense of sacrificial service."

That makes him feel that all this human life is worth saving. It has an inherent moral worth.

You remember what Jane Addams makes us see in the crowded city quarters, where men and women constantly jostle each other and press upon every inch of space in shop, tenement and street: "Nothing is more impressive there than the strength, the continuity, the varied and powerful manifestations of sacrificial love. Every tenement house contains women who spend their hurried days in preparing food and clothing, and pass their sleepless nights in tending and nursing their children, with never one thought of their own comfort or pleasure. Every shop is crowded with workmen who spend all on their children and reserve for themselves but the shabbiest clothing and a crowded place at the family table."

As the Christian begins to look at his city with eyes of patient faith, he sees the possibilities of its life, and there is burned into his soul an eager desire to free it from all that hinders its healthy growth. He sees how there goes into the poorer sections of a great city a veritable procession of its vice, so that the street, which is often the only playground for the children, becomes frequently a hotbed of iniquity. There are temptations enough for the country boy and girl, as all of us know who have seen something of the sordid and sodden sin of the small town; but it is only by a miracle often, that the child of the slums is kept from

physical and moral contamination. He lives in a place where recreation can hardly be dissociated from vice, where children die young or grow up in a polluted moral atmosphere, where the saloon and the vicious house have entered and the church has departed.

The city Christian, therefore, will help in some society engaged in the work of social uplift and protection: the playground association, the associated charities, the children's aid societies, the prisoners' aid association, the settlement houses and recreation centres, the churches of his own faith which are carrying on a social work, the boys' club of his own parish, if it has one, the neighborhood movements of every sort that aim to make the city a safe and pleasant place to live in. The Church cannot say, We have nothing to do with questions of decent housing, unemployment, infectious diseases, poverty and the like; we are here to deal with the personal problem of sin and redemption. For the city Christian knows now that it is easier to keep people from going to the bad than to save them after they are gone. He knows that "when near a children's playground there is a dangerous precipice, over which the little ones are constantly falling, it is better to build a parapet to keep them safe than to erect a hospital to care for them after they are hurt."

There are innumerable social agencies outside the churches which are engaged in this work of prevention, and they all need the Church for the more complete accomplishment of the objects for which they exist. The special province of the Church, in its relations with all such agencies, is that of spiritual inspiration and enlightenment. The men and women who are doing the work are, for the most part, Christian believers—only they hunger for sympathy and help from other believers. Whether they are Christians in name or not, they gladly welcome every Christian effort to strengthen their work and create in it a finer spirit. Here is what one of the leaders in the work of social betterment has to say about the Church's part in such work: "We have a vast array of institutions, societies, committees, foundations, governmental bureaus and departments, all inspired by the idea of social responsibility, all potentially religious in aim and spirit, all ready and eager to become the instrument of religion in its practical mission among the sons of men. The one indispensable element which these secular agencies of social betterment cannot supply is inspiration, and that is the one element which religion alone *can* supply."

The moment the earnest Christian comes face to face with these great problems of city life, he will find himself forced to consider two vital

questions about his life. First, he will be obliged to consider very seriously the question of his own religious practice, as an individual and in his home. Second, he will begin to understand better the obligations of Christian citizenship.

If we are to have a city of righteousness we must lay its foundations in a pure and healthy home life. All the tendencies of modern city life are towards the destruction of the home. Apartments have taken the place of houses; societies and instructors have taken over the duties of fathers and mothers; modern education, both religious and secular, all tends to decrease the sense of parental responsibility; the presence of social and business life pushes hard against the quiet intercourse of home life. The Christian in the city cannot be blind to these facts. He will fight sturdily against the temptation to let the home ties become loosened. The tragedy of the city streets will make him conscious that the same gospel of prevention which he hears preached for the tenement is needed in every home. Those dark shadows need never have fallen; that boy need not be breaking his mother's heart; that girl might have been saved from foolish frivolity, had the mother done her part, had the father guarded his son's companionships and kept his confidence and instructed him in life's mysteries. Nothing can take the place

of the religious atmosphere that ought to fill every Christian home. Moreover, family life, perhaps, is the real test of religion. We are usually much better Christians in church and in society than in the family. Outside, we curb our impatience and control our faults. There we like to put the best foot forward, and in religion, as in everything else, a certain convention and pride of respectability makes us try to "appear our prettiest." Too often, like Mr. Dooley, we feel, "What is the use of having a family, if you cannot be disagreeable in the bosom of it?" Or at least we act on the principle, if we do not proclaim it!

And back of the home life will be the individual life. Nothing can make up for the lack of personal Christianity. What is our religious practice? How far is the heathenism of modern life due to the individual failure of men like myself? Have I personally ever really attempted to put my Christianity into practice in many of life's relations? Have I tried to make it a working creed in business and professional life? Have I been satisfied with myself as I am, so long as no uncomfortable questions were asked? And satisfied with life as it is, when things are changing least? There are people,—perhaps I am one of them—who would be "equally horrified at hearing the Christian religion doubted—and at

seeing it practised!" Men have done almost everything with Christianity, except try to live it!

The moment we begin to search our consciences, we shall find that the examination will raise more questions than we can answer: questions about wealth and poverty, questions about sacrifice and service, social and economic problems that strike at the very roots of modern life. Well, it ought to be our duty to go about the examination with the deliberate purpose of inquiring whether we are doing all we can to embody Christianity in daily life—and there is no place where the consideration is more needed than in the city, where obstinate questionings are fairly thrust upon us if we will take time to think.

And then, second, the Christian in the city will have the duty of citizenship brought home to him as nowhere else. He will come to understand that the faithful discharge of civic and political obligations is a part of his Christian consecration. When our Lord entered Jerusalem and came face to face with the shameful unseemliness of the temple traffic, he proved Himself "the first citizen of history" in driving out of the sacred precincts the corrupt crowd of His day who were for the city then what the modern political grafters are to the cities of America now.

There is no such thing as a good Christian who is a negligent and indifferent citizen. We

are gradually learning that lesson. Good men now are ashamed openly to adopt an attitude of indifference to civic obligations and say, "I pray thee, have me excused"; though there are still some who shrug their shoulders and ask, "What is the use?" The answer is, in Yankee fashion, another question, "Do you believe that the majority of the voters in your city are wilfully ignorant or morally corrupt? If not, then when things go wrong must it not be because the good and the well-informed are indifferent, inactive or not united?"

The Christian in the city has a splendid chance to deal with affairs of government at first hand and in close grip. He must seize his opportunity. He must make himself a well-informed citizen who does not wait till primary or election day to exercise his civic responsibilities. Because too many of us do wait, we have been rather bitterly disappointed in the experiment of popular primaries, which were expected automatically, as it were, to put good and competent men into office. To go farther back, the Christian citizen realizes the power of public opinion. He (why not she?) helps to create this force for righteousness by keeping informed on public questions. He tries to know something at first hand about all agencies of public betterment. He has his eyes and ears open—also his mind! He belongs

to the city club or some other organization which will give him the information without which his vote ceases to be a Christian exercise of the franchise.

In all this we have been inquiring what the individual Christian ought to do in the city, not what the Church as a corporate society should do. That is because individual faithfulness necessarily comes first. The churches, in their corporate capacity, can never do anything until their members are aroused. If, however, we can get a large number of church people interested in these things; if they begin to work for civic and social righteousness; if their hearts are fired with enthusiasm for the city's welfare; and if enough of them get this eager and intense interest—then, because they are members of the Christian body and because they will dominate the life of the organization, ways will be found for the Church as a whole to speak its mind.

Of course, the Church will have to distinguish between moral questions and purely political and economic questions. Because almost all problems are mixed problems—partly religious and partly economic; partly questions of methods as well as of morals—we must move with caution in our corporate capacity; but it is usually better to make mistakes than to do nothing. As the mass of Christian people become Christian citizens,

it is going to be increasingly impossible for any church, as a church, to abstain from community work.

When the Church is finally aroused so that it gives the same consideration to social righteousness and civic welfare it now gives to missionary problems and religious education, we shall have a new call to sound when we ask men to come into the Christian society. "Take the case of a rich commercial man," says one whose Churchmanship and social enthusiasm have always gone hand in hand. "Tell him that if he is individually converted and trusting in his Saviour and confessing his private sins, he will go to heaven when he dies: does that call find a ready response? does it spur him on to alter the conditions of human life for his fellow men? What incentive is there for him to do more than keep his personal salvation secure by prayers and observances and die in grace with a blessed hope of another rather selfish existence with a harp in glory hereafter? But tell him that the Kingdom of God is at hand, that if he joins the Church as an active member he will be expected to take his part in the bringing about of a new order here and now; tell him that the Church is out for the establishment of God's sovereignty over all departments of human life, and his whole religious outlook is changed."

In the meanwhile, let us remember—we Christians—that the Church is not a vague entity. It is just ourselves, you and I. We have no right to sit down and bemoan the Church's inactivity. It is your neglect; my neglect. You and I should be alive to the city's needs. You and I, if we are so alive, will not be like the psalmist who held his tongue and spake nothing. We will cry aloud. We will communicate our enthusiasm to others. We will become centres of knowledge and zeal, centres of influence to mould the character of our neighborhood and change the city's life.

We will begin right in our own churches. If we cannot do anything else, we will make them *friendly* churches, where people know each other. The warmth of friendliness will give an enthusiasm for a fuller Christian life. That in turn will make an increasing number of warm-hearted Christians. And that will make our city a city of God.

The Church and the City! Phillips Brooks said that where men are thickest, there is the place for the Christian to feed and use his Christianity. It is a joy and privilege to live in a great city; only—the Christian in the city, above all others, needs to know that his religion must not submit to be shut up into technicalities; it must claim all life for its own.

XV

SOCIAL CHRISTIANITY IN THE COUNTRY

A FRIEND who is keenly alive to the needs of the Church in the country pointed the other day to the spire of a village church. "I call it," he said, "the Church of the Holy Anachronism. The rector has a splendid opportunity for service; the people under his leadership could become a power for good in the community; but both he and they are living a half century behind their time. If they could only be aroused to the ideal of a socialized Christianity, there is no limit here to the influence such a congregation might exert."

Social service in the small community: what does it mean? Suppose we take the words separately.

First,—service. That will remind us that we are not merely saved *from* something, nor even saved *for* something, but saved *to* something. The first duty of the Christian is to serve. That is at the very heart of our conception of religion. The Church should inspire to service; worship

strengthens for service. Unlike the Sabbath, which closes the week, Sunday begins it. That of itself is significant. It is not simply a day of rest, it is a day of worship, a day of renewal. Christian worship sends us out with a quickened spirit, a fresh vision, a keener desire to serve. We go out to live for God and to labor for men. We come back from our work hungry, and when we have been fed we go out again to serve and to labor. That is service. Thank God, it has always been at the root of Christian discipleship. Any conception of religion that has not stressed it is a maimed and distorted gospel. Any Churchman who is content to feed his own life only, to worship for his good alone, to concern himself only about his own soul, has not the spirit of Christ.

But *social* service—what is that? That means not alone the saving of the individual and service for the individual, it is the saving of society and service for the community. It means not merely concern for the individual, but interest in everything that makes the individual what he is. It means even more—the reign of God in men, over men and through men. It means the vision of the Kingdom.

Because the claims of an industrial democracy have been so constantly pressed it has been assumed that a social gospel is needed in the main for the city with its congested life. There the

social evil, the drink evil, industrial injustice are problems flaunted in our face. There life among the very poor is so depressing, so dull, hard and monotonous, so joyless, sunless, squalid and ugly, that many hearts have been touched and many hands are lifted to help.

But what about the social gospel in the country?

The present weakness of the rural church is largely the result of social conditions. For the church in the country *is* weak. Some recent statistics are startling in their revelation of its weakness. A careful rural survey in Ohio showed only 40 per cent of the country population identified with any church life. In Illinois 1700 country churches have been closed in the past twenty years. In Missouri a survey found 550 churches abandoned. A recent rural survey in Central New York showed that one-fifth of the families visited had no church connection whatever. The situation is so serious that when President Hyde wrote of rural conditions, he called his book "Impending Paganism in New England."

Now, Social Christianity tries to find out why; studies the situation, and then asks how it can be remedied.

Why? The first fact to be noted is the drift to the city. The Church is weak because the country itself is weak. Year after year it is robbed of its most alert and active young life. Every

young man of ability looks toward the city with longing eyes; every young woman regards the city as the height of attainable happiness. The social and economic advantages of the city are greatly exaggerated, its disadvantages are overlooked. In schools, at home and through literature the young are encouraged to leave the country for the city. The schools are to a great extent responsible for this drift. "The rural school ordinarily is taught by a young woman from town who regards town or city life as the only satisfying life and is staying there only until she can get a town position—or marry!" In the larger schools of the country towns the one idea set before students is that of a college education—for which the great mass of pupils are not fitted; they cannot go and so become dissatisfied and discontented, or they do go and prove incompetent.

So the country sends its young life to the city. Often the result is tragic. The few who make a brilliant success and others who reap satisfactory rewards are more than overbalanced by the many who fall by the wayside. It is a well-known fact that among the ranks of the unemployed in the great cities there are tragic instances without number of country boys who left the farm with its dull toil to find themselves stranded in the city with no occupation at all. Even among

the fairly successful are many whose moderate measure of success has been won at the expense of a finer and truer life which they have lost.

The second great cause of the weakness of the country church is found in the unhappy divisions of Christendom. The country churches are weak because there are so many of them. The consequence is a poorly paid and often inefficient ministry; inefficient, not through any fault of their own, but because working under the drawbacks of a worried and anxious life. Salaries are small and expenses of light, fuel and travelling make them even smaller.

The result of this condition is a continual procession of clergy. Many regard their work as temporary, not permanent; hardly more than conveniently temporary. The country clergy are so hampered by poverty and so discouraged, without books and without any larger outlook, that they settle into a dull disregard of the opportunities still there, a settled pessimism, a discouragement sometimes due to the fact that they see work to be done and have not the means of doing it, have not the money even to make necessary calls in the missions away from home or in the more scattered farmhouses.

That is the situation, what of the remedy?

Some would say, abandon much of the work;

close many of the churches; let the people unite in one strong village church. In many cases there is no reason why they should not combine, no definite theological convictions which would prevent. With ourselves who are Churchmen there *is* a reason. We believe that we have a conception of religion which in honesty and with faithfulness to conviction we cannot give up. For most of our people, whatever their belief about the need of an apostolic ministry, to abandon them would be to leave them churchless. Moreover, ours is a conception of Christianity which the village and the country need. Our whole system is one that stands for something vital and necessary. The country has been swept by one wave after another of mass evangelism, the last dying effort of a failing church; evangelism without even the redeeming features of city revivals, because conducted by peripatetic revivalists of the most vulgar type, with the narrowest and most puritanical attitude towards recreation and amusement, with a theology long since outgrown, with a crass emotionalism that leaves the country upon which they have been inflicted spiritually burned out. The country needs the Church. We cannot, with any decent belief in what the Church stands for, permit ourselves to desert the field.

As a matter of fact, we must give others credit

for like convictions. They have cherished beliefs as well as we. Even though convictions are not strong, prejudices are, and despite occasional successful combinations of rural churches, Christian unity seems a vision and a dream. We believe that in time the dream will be realized. We pray that the day of its realization may not be far distant. But in the meanwhile it will not come simply by talking about it, and it is equally certain that it will not come very rapidly by occasional church combinations here and there. The way must be prepared for it—and there is no better way of preparation than that we shall all, whatever our convictions, work together wherever we can and however we can. Out of common work with a common purpose may come a common faith and a common worship, even as now we have a common hope.

What then? How shall we work? What must be our aim? What has a Social Gospel to tell us of that aim and work?

First.—What the country most needs is the pastor; men who feel that the rural work is a distinct vocation, men who love the country and its people, men who see that with all the disadvantages of rural life there is a possibility of making it fine and beautiful, men who have a passion for people, men who want to make their own little part of the world a decent, respectable,

comfortable place in which a religious life can develop.

To a man who really feels this the country work has limitless charm and delight. There we get to know people as we never can know them in the city. If we love people, the pastoral work of the country, the close personal contact it offers, the position of leadership which any man of ability and conscientious determination can win, have infinite value. "Many a city rector now struggling along at a larger salary and feeling the strain terribly, would find happiness and contentment in the simpler country life, would find the joy of the ministry in supplying what the country most needs, the pastor who is friend, helper, counsellor and guide"—and knows that he must become the friend before he can be any of the rest.

My own work carries me into the smaller towns and villages of New York, and wherever I have gone I have found a ready welcome, such heartiness and friendship, such a quick responsiveness, that I can see how hungry the people of the country are for one who will come among them as a friend and helper. Where will any clergyman find surer returns for faithful labor? Why is it that when the call for missionaries meets with so quick and ready a response there are not more men who will heed the call to

this mission field near at home, who will be willing to spend and be spent for such work?

What we need, then, is the man who feels that the country pastorate is a distinct vocation, who will study all the phases of the rural problem and give himself fully to its solution. If this is putting the emphasis too much on the work of the clergy, it is because the minister in the country is the natural leader in the life of the community. The city has leaders innumerable who can quicken the Church to new conceptions of service. In the small town, leadership is the one thing lacking. As in other days "the parson" was a real personage and came to find an acknowledgment of leadership in the very name by which he was called, so it must be now if the heaven is to work in the country church. So, while we speak of the *Christian* in the city, we must think more particularly of the *Christian Minister* in the country.

Second.—When we begin to find the supply of such men they will need to have the social vision. They must be men not only with a passion for helping individuals, but with a passion for helping groups of individuals, with a community spirit and a community purpose. The country has suffered religiously because big men have felt that it did not offer them a man's job. The man of social vision knows that it does.

There are men in the country now, who, with a wider outlook, could make their work tell tremendously. In parishes where men with such a vision have worked one finds traces still of the impression they have made on the whole community. In one small town in New York, the rector is Chairman of the County Board of Child Welfare, is a member of the County and Town Anti-Tuberculosis Committee, is the organizer of the local United Charities; he and men of his congregation have membership in the Board of Directors of the Y. M. C. A., in the local hospital, in the Home for the Aged Women, are Chairmen of the Fresh Air Work, managers and scout masters of the Boy Scout troops, and officers of a Joint Men's Club of the town. We need such social work in the village and town churches. Without it the Church will die, simply because it does not serve, as anything dies which does not grow. What about a social programme, then, for such a church with such a pastor?

1. The country rector will, first of all, make his church as far as possible a social centre. There will be special services emphasizing the point of social contact. A memorial service for the departed at All Saints' time can be made a community, not merely a parish, service; an annual reunion may bring many from outlying points to a service in the early fall; the harvest home

service can take on a special tone; the Christmas service, with a community Christmas tree, may kindle local friendships; a New Year service may deal with a new community outlook; there will be services in the church on Washington's birthday, on Memorial Day, on Independence Day; these services will be tied up to the general patriotic celebrations. The clergyman who wants to serve the community will soon be recognized and accepted as a leader in such social undertakings. If he is a man among men he cannot help being a leader of men. If he is a godly man he will impress upon others a sense of the divine. If he loves his Church and believes in it he will make his influence felt in every community activity. If he makes his religion touch the community life he will find in every effort a splendid chance to show what a Church religion is. The Church idea is naturally social. Protestantism is individualistic and must conquer its excessive individualism to become a religion of the Kingdom. The Catholic conception is inherently social, with social sacraments; and a Churchly religion is necessarily and naturally a social religion.

2. The country rector will make his parish house, if he has one, a social centre. If he has no parish house he will try to get one; if he cannot do anything else he will use the basement

of the church for the purpose. In this parish house he will furnish clean amusements and recreations; through a lyceum course, arranged possibly in conjunction with other congregations, he will give intellectual improvement; there will be entertainments, plays, moving pictures, all sorts of recreation. Near it will be a playground—for which arrangements can be made more readily than we imagine—but the rector will understand that leaders in play are more important than playgrounds. He and his wife and a few of his people can easily become leaders, and in losing themselves in such work they will really be redeeming their own lives from drudgery and dulness.

On days when people of the farming districts come to town he will have some special recreation feature, will serve refreshments, possibly, or at least arrange for a social gathering. In the parish hall there will be fairs, exhibits of garden and farm products and home work with prizes; there will be child welfare and other exhibits; for the boys there will be athletic games and meets of all kinds, with competition between various villages. There will be classes for children in things not taught in the country school, sewing, cooking, athletics, kitchen gardening, housekeeping, folk dancing, etc.

He will make his parish house a means of teach-

ing good living. He will make it a centre of contentment to check the unhealthy dissatisfaction of rural life.

3. The country rector will combine with other ministers as far as possible in social activities. Villages and towns near the open country often have an oversupply of paid recreation of the poorest sort, often they are positively defiled by amusements of a low type. He and his ministerial friends can give something in the way of recreation that will train in purity, courage, honor, truthfulness and community spirit. Instead of paid entertainments, they will be teaching people to entertain themselves; better yet, to entertain others, rather than *be* entertained. A good expert will more than pay his weekly wage for an entertainment where town people are trained to take part. This will possibly lead up to pageants, etc. Through the Boy Scout organizations, on the playground, and in societies for the girls and young women, he and his associates will be preaching the gospel of prevention.

In this larger work of recreation and prevention there must be coöperation. The pastor must be large-minded enough to work with others; he must be big-hearted enough to do all for the sake of the community, not for the sake of his own church. His church will reap an indirect

benefit (as will all other Christian congregations) if only he and others will make service the keynote of their labor and not church aggrandisement its obvious purpose. The church, as well as the individual, will save its life by losing it.

4. Often the rector will find that his efforts at united work are coolly received; but he will not be discouraged. He will seek to coöperate with other congregations. He will get the people of **all** these congregations together whenever he **can**, even though informally. Whatever his convictions he will surely have no scruples in uniting with his brethren in such social work. He will be trying to break down prejudices. He will not voice his own too loudly. He will try to show that an apostolic ministry is not self-centred, shell-encrusted seclusiveness. When the discussion arose as to whether Peary or Cook had discovered the North Pole, someone said that what he was most interested in was not who had discovered the pole but where it had been found. He had always supposed that it would be discovered in one of our churches. The country parson must make his church full of warmth and friendliness.

5. He will coöperate with all other agencies for community welfare; the village library; the school; the grange; the local board of health; the fraternal organizations; the farmers' insti-

tutes; the village improvement society. When these do not exist, it will be part of his work to have them organized. In a country community there are very few ways in which people naturally come together, and in order to bring about any concerted action it is necessary first to establish common interests. The most natural starting points are the church and the school. Many clergymen have begun by taking an interest in the school and starting a parent-teachers' association which often develops into a community centre.

6. Finally, if the country pastor is to make a success of such a work he must make a social study of his community. He will try to know something of economic conditions, the sources of income, the moral conditions of the place, the character of the saloons, the existence of substitutes if the community is a "dry" territory. He will know something about housing and health conditions, something about the schools and education; he will use the rural free delivery for correspondence schools, etc.; he will, if he can possibly secure the money, use the automobile for rural visiting, and he will attempt a religious census. Once he has begun such a work he will find others to help. Some city rector may be found who will see that friends and funds are provided—a rector big enough to see that if his

people are given something to do for others they will do more for him. Social workers and visiting nurses may be provided, travelling libraries may be started; at any rate, some relationship may be established with city friends who will send books, magazines, and—best of all—letters to isolated country homes. Girls' Friendly Society associates in city parishes may be found to conduct a correspondence school for girls. If found, they must be made to feel that they must be ready to receive as well as give. And the parson must learn the same lesson. Learning it, he will grow in grace as he gives grace, and as he grows his conception of his ministry will develop. He will make that ministry as broad as his parish and his interests as wide as the community. He will count nothing human outside his influence. He will try to be a man's man. He will "love folks." The story, doubtless, is familiar of the old man who was dying. His pastor tried to comfort him by telling him that he would soon be with the angels. "Angels," said the old man, "I don't want angels, I *like folks*." Above all, then, the country parson will not be too much the parson—just a friend and brother; a guide and leader.

This will be the country parson's task; better, his constant delight. For he will have the satisfaction of knowing that no man in the ministry

is doing a work more worthy of a man's best powers or more needed for the religious growth of America.

The programme is a large one? Yes, but no larger than the greatness of the work demands. Such a programme will need men of leadership and of vision to undertake it? Yes, and there at last we meet the crux of the problem. If we are to have such men we must give them the tools with which to work and the ability to use them. Why do our seminaries, seemingly, prepare their men for city work only? Why is there no special training for country work? Why no occasional lectures by some successful country pastor? Why no addresses by experts in recreation, education, civics, village improvement, sanitation, agriculture? Why no effort to stir the consciences of students for the ministry so that some of them, at least, may feel that a country call is big enough to be a life work, not a stepping stone to a different labor?

And above all else, why is it not seen that the best material gift that the man of wealth could offer to those who are struggling with the country problem is the means necessary to train leaders and pay them when they are trained?

Missions? Yes, missions until the farthest man has been reached and the darkest spot lightened by the Gospel. But the farthest man

is not necessarily the man farthest away in mere distance and the darkest spot is not necessarily in some heathen land.

Missions? Yes. But if we love America we will not forget missions at home. Among the foreign born in our own crowded cities may be found the darkest spot and the farthest man—but that is another story. In the no less important field, the thin rural district, there are also dark places and forgotten folk.

From the country still flow streams of humanity to the city life. On the life of the rural community, therefore, will depend the life of the nation. The country parson must see that the springs of that life are not poisoned at their source. Send him to his work with the vision and the means with which to realize it, and from the country to the city will flow, with its streams of humanity, streams of redeeming grace. Send him—and for him and for us there will be a blessing and a sure reward.

ADDENDUM

XVI

THE BROWNS CHOOSE A CHURCH *

MR. AND MRS. BROWN had decided that they ought to belong to some church. They were very nice people, the Browns; but they had not been strong on churchgoing. Mr. Brown was tired on Sunday and wanted to rest, or go off for a motor trip, and Mrs. Brown didn't want to drag him to church against his will. Nor did she feel that it was quite right to go herself and leave him alone on the only day they had together. So for years they had been just occasional churchgoers—semi-occasional would express it better.

Then something happened. I never knew just what it was. I imagine the details were—not nice. It was something about their fifteen-year old boy. Naturally he had been brought up without very intense religious convictions. He had been away at school and he got into an ugly scrape. Some anxious days followed, and Mr. Brown had several serious talks with the boy.

* Parts of this chapter appear in slightly different form in my book, *The Religion of the Incarnation*, and are reprinted by consent of the publishers, The Young Churchman Co., Milwaukee, Wis.

Whatever it was, the parents realized that they had been living rather pagan lives. Practically speaking, the family were without God in the world.

So the Browns decided to belong to a church. The boy needed it. It had been borne in upon them that they needed it too, if they were to brace him up before it was too late.

But what church should they join?

They knew how some of their acquaintances had decided the matter. It didn't seem to be a very satisfactory way. After all, as the Browns understood them, it doesn't really make much difference where one goes. All religious roads lead heavenward. The churches are all working for the same thing. So the choice was usually a little haphazard with most of the people the Browns knew. It was about like this: A man goes where his friends go, or where the members of the congregation are most congenial. He joins the same church of which his parents were members. Or he goes where the service and music are most to his taste. Or he identifies himself with some congregation whose pastor pleases him, or where the preaching is most acceptable. Or worst of all—though he does not confess this as his motive, and perhaps is hardly aware of it himself even—he goes where he and his family will meet desirable acquaintances or gain social

standing and secure an introduction into certain circles.

Somehow, in their present serious mood, that was a poor way of settling the question for the Browns. You see they had been through a heart-searching experience, and they felt quite serious about it.

There was a neighbor of the Browns who was a Protestant Episcopalian, though she didn't like the name of her Church very much; she sometimes called herself an American Catholic. Still, she was a much better churchwoman than a lot of others who liked the name better than she could. When Mrs. Brown spoke to her about their decision, she found, for the first time, a sympathetic listener.

"You know," said Mrs. Brown, "I have been disappointed in the way some of our friends talk. I have been feeling lately that spiritual things are so very important. I know I can't express just what I mean; but it seems to me that this is going to affect our whole life with God. If choosing a church is to mean a real spiritual development for Will and myself, I don't think it should be settled lightly and carelessly."

The result was that Mrs. Brown met the rector of St. Mary's. He proved sympathetic too. "You are quite right," he said. "If Christ really founded a Church, the right way, the only

way to decide which body we shall join is to try as best we can to find out which is the Church that Christ established. It may involve considerable study on our part; it may lead to much searching of heart, and much examination of the foundations of our belief; it may lead us to lay aside certain opinions that we have imbibed almost from infancy; it may shatter old and dear relationships—but nevertheless, since this is the greatest question in life that we shall ever have to decide, it should be settled in all seriousness and earnestness, at no matter what expense of time and thought.

“And so,” he continued, “if you have decided to belong to a Church because you feel that it is in accordance with the expressed desire of Christ, the way to make a choice among the many Christian bodies that claim to spring from Him is to try to learn which, in its doctrine, government and worship, is most like the Church He founded. We must ask which resembles the primitive Church, in doctrine unchanged from what the Apostles taught and practised; which has a church polity such as we find among the first Christians; which has a church worship such as the study of the Bible and of history would show to be like that of the first ages of the Church’s life.”

Mrs. Brown talked it over with her husband that evening. They seemed to think that in such

a search they were foredoomed to failure; that with scores of denominations each claiming to be the pure Church of Christ it would be next to impossible to decide with any certainty among their conflicting claims. But they determined to call again on the rector. "I think we ought to do that," Mrs. Brown said. "You know, after our talk to-day I felt that at any rate we ought to try to find out the truth. Then if we have done all in our power and have failed, it will not be our fault."

There followed a good many talks with the rector, who said that he was sure they could decide the question, and decide it with no other book but the Bible in hand. So they started on their study of the Church of the Bible. What follows summarizes what the rector of St. Mary's taught them.

Let us take our Bibles, imagine ourselves among some of the scenes described in its pages, and try to see what the primitive Church was like—so he began his first instruction. Then he added:

In this examination of Scripture I ask you, however, to remember one thing: that in the case of any dispute over the meaning of a passage, we can best learn what is the true view by consulting the early Christian fathers. What did

they think the passage meant? In their opinions we have the interpretation of the men who came immediately after the time of Christ and His Apostles, as to what the Bible teaching means. These men, who knew the Apostles or their immediate successors, would, of course, have an intimate knowledge of their mind. On any disputed point their opinion is as valuable as would be, for example, a letter from an intimate friend of the poet Browning, who had long known him and who had talked with him and with his contemporaries, and from these conversations could tell what this or that passage in one of his poems meant.

(1) With Bible in hand, then, and with this warning in mind, let us try to see what the primitive Church was. We are in Ephesus, and we hear that the great Apostle St. Paul is coming to the city. We join the crowds of people who are going to hear him preach. Among them are some men who press forward to converse with him. "We have heard," they say, "of what you told the jailer at Philippi; and many others have received the same words, so full of comfort. We remember that you said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' And we do believe. We have heard of His wonderful life, of His death for us, of His glorious resurrection. We believe in Him as the Son of God."

So they speak, and St. Paul looks at them, and asks: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" They are puzzled. "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." And now it is St. Paul's turn to be astonished. "Unto what then were ye baptized?" he asks, and they say, "Unto John's baptism."

"Ah," says the great Apostle, "John but baptized with the baptism of repentance. His was an act whereby men, openly confessing their sins, took their place among those who looked for the coming redemption. As he baptized the people, he said to them that they should believe on Him who should come after, that is, on Jesus Christ. His baptism brought no new grace of life; that must come from Him whose forerunner John was, who should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (So we must understand the brief report of the Apostle's words given us in the Acts.) And "when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them." (See Acts 19:1-6.)

So we see that with St. Paul something must follow belief in Christ: the believer must be baptized, and then apostolic hands must be laid upon him, that he may receive the Holy Ghost.

(2) But was that the general practice?

Well, we go back a few years, and now we are in Samaria. St. Philip is preaching there, and when the people believe him thus "preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ," what happens? "They were baptized, both men and women."

But is that all? Does he not put his hands upon them, as did St. Paul with the Ephesian converts? No, apparently, not. Ah, wait! It is not St. Philip who lays his hands on them, but the gift is to be theirs, nevertheless. "When the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (Acts 8:12-17.) It might well be a description of a confirmation day in our own parish.

So, after all, the same course was followed in Samaria as at Ephesus. First, baptism; then what we now call confirmation, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost in all His fulness.

(3) But why did not St. Philip confirm? If he baptized, why must an Apostle be sent for the second rite?

Well, we go back a little further, to see who St. Philip was. It is in Jerusalem, and among the early Christians there have been disputes over the administration of the charitable funds—for these early Christians were not perfect, you see, any more than are the later ones. But now the dispute has been settled, and seven men are selected for ordination at the Apostles' hands into a lower order of the ministry (Acts 6:1-6). Philip is among these, and, as we see, his ordination gives him certain powers. He preaches; he baptizes; but he is not of the apostolic order, he is only a deacon, and so he does not confirm or ordain.

(4) So you say: now I see it all. There were these deacons and others like them, I suppose, who afterward formed the ministry of the Church; but when the Apostles died, their gifts died with them, and that is the reason so many do not believe in confirmation to-day; those who could give the Holy Spirit are no longer with us.

Wait a moment! There were not these two orders of the ministry only; there were three.

We are in one of the eastern cities, and we meet a Christian who has with him copies of St. Paul's epistles or letters to the different Churches which he founded. Here is one to the Philippian Church. St. Paul joins St. Timothy with him, and then we find from his salutation that there

are two other orders of the ministry besides, making three in all: "To all the saints which are at Philippi," he says, "with the bishops and deacons." There are other epistles, too, and in them we read of presbyters (sometimes called bishops) as well as deacons. St. Titus is bidden by St. Paul to ordain them in every city (Titus 1:5); St. Timothy is given charge concerning them (1 Tim. 5:17); and in one of St. Peter's epistles also (1 Peter 5:1) we find him exhorting the elders or presbyters. Moreover, these elders, like the deacons, are evidently of the clergy, not merely specially appointed laymen.

Nor does the office of the Apostles cease with themselves. Not to prolong the subject further, we should find, if we had the Greek originals of the New Testament in our hands, the following list of those who are expressly called Apostles, in addition to the Twelve: Matthias, chosen by lot to be of their number; Paul, "an Apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ;" James, whom tradition names as the first bishop of Jerusalem; Barnabas, Andronicus, Junias, Epaphroditus, Timothy, Titus, Silas, and Luke. "Moreover, they are seen doing the same work as the Twelve. For example, history and tradition bear witness to the fact that the Apostle Timothy was the first Bishop of Ephesus, and the Apostle Titus the first Bishop of Crete, being ordained

and appointed thereto by the Apostle Paul. The epistles of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus not only accord with this statement, but are irreconcilably absurd on any other supposition; for they show that these men were left by St. Paul not only with power to do such things as all presbyters could do, but also to superintend the whole work of the Church in their respective jurisdictions—to give order concerning the doctrine which the presbyters were to preach; to rectify all deficiencies; to ordain presbyters in all cities; to examine into the qualifications of all candidates for the priesthood and the diaconate, being careful to lay hands suddenly on no man. And whence came all this authority and power? St. Paul tells us, for he says to his ‘Son Timothy,’ ‘Stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.’”

Yes—there were three orders of the ministry, deacons, presbyters (or bishops) and Apostles; and the apostolic office is carried on to the successors of the Twelve. Why the name “Bishop” afterward came to be restricted to them we cannot now stop to explain fully. Enough to say that out of honor to the original Twelve the name Apostle is dropped, when they die, and their successors are called Bishops, while that name, therefore, is no longer applied to the second order of the ministry, who are now called pres-

byters or priests. This explanation is not mine; it is the reason given by the early Church writers of whom I spoke.

(5) Well, you say, now we have the whole sum and substance of Christianity. I must be a follower of Christ, baptized in His name, and by the laying on of apostolic hands I must receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Again, wait a bit! There is something more. If we are still, in imagination, to company with those early Christians, we shall find that they meet for worship. They "continue steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers." And this worship, at first daily, is always the special feature of Sunday. We are at Troas, when St. Paul preaches, and it is on "the first day of the week" that "the disciples come together to break bread." (Acts 20:7.)

Moreover, the worship is liturgical: it consists of "the prayers"—that is, the usual, well known, set forms of prayer, not prayer generally. (See Acts 2:42. The article "the" is in the Greek.)

And what was the worship? It was "the breaking of the bread"—in other words, the Holy Communion—and it was, as we have seen, not a service to be held two or three times a year, but "every first day of the week."

And how was it regarded? Did these early Christians consider it a mere memorial feast? Not so. If we still hold in our hands those epistles of the great St. Paul, we find that he believed that in this service the Lord Christ was really present. Writing to the Corinthians, he tells them how the Eucharist was instituted, and then warns them in solemn words to be careful to communicate only after due and worthy preparation; for "whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Why? Because "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body," that is, not discerning the presence, though it is really and truly there. The Holy Communion, then, is indeed a memorial feast, but is much more—it is a high and holy mystery.

(6) So then, you say, we at last have the whole scheme of the Church. We shall do all this ourselves, and when our children are grown up we shall have them baptized, too.

But why wait? If we go into any of these early Christian assemblies we shall see not adults only, but we shall find baptized children there. St. Peter, when he urged the first converts to be baptized, said, "The promise is unto you, and to your children"; St. Paul, writing to

those who were members of the Church, addressed children as well as adults; and we hear that he has baptized whole families and households—among whom, surely, there were children. (Acts 2:38–39. Ephesians 6:1. Colossians 3:20. Acts 16:15, 33. 1 Cor. 1:6.)

(7) Now at last, you say, all is clear. We have found the Church, we have entered its fold and received its gifts of grace. Surely, here we will stay, free from sin, so long as life remains.

Alas, some day temptation proves too great, and you fall, and fall grievously. You ask pardon of God, but there comes no comfort to your soul; you are weak, and you sin again, and with this fresh error staring you in the face, you fear that God will not forgive you. As you are thus troubled, weary and heavy laden, you meet St. John. He hears your sad tale, lifts his hands over you, blesses you, and bids you depart in peace. For you are forgiven, he says; you need not doubt it. My words, as I speak them by authority of God, bring you the blessed assurance. Did not our Lord Himself give us this power? Did not He say, as he breathed on us, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained"?

(8) So, as you depart in blessed peace and calm, you think of the angelic face of the saintly

Apostle, and you say, Surely, surely, here I have the Church's head, here is the father of all the faithful. Another, however, remembers the marvellous labors of the wonderful Apostle to the Gentiles, and interrupts you, No, St. Paul is the head of the Church. And yet another, No, it is St. Peter; to him the Lord gave the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

As we dispute, there enters one who attended the first Council of the Church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-31). He tells us that none of these presided at the council, but that its president was St. James, not of the original Twelve; he says that the Apostles, elders and brethren (the bishops, clergy and laity) there came together, and it was St. James, not St. Peter or St. John, who presided and pronounced decision on the question in dispute. Some one, perhaps, will say that St. Peter must be the head of the Church, because certain wonderful words were said to him by Christ. But our better informed brother tells us how, many years later, St. Paul withstood St. Peter face to face; in many ways he makes us understand that the Apostles were equals, members of a college, or body, so to speak, and that the head of the Church is neither St. Peter, nor St. Paul, nor St. John—its Head is our Risen Lord, the Lord Christ, who rules it from His throne in Heaven.

And so you have the picture of the primitive Church. What body, of all the Christian communions about us, resembles it?

You have seen what its characteristics are: Entrance is by baptism for young and old; then comes confirmation, the laying on of hands for the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost, and always by an Apostle or his successor; then Holy Communion, celebrated, not two or three times a year, but every Lord's Day; then, if the soul requires it, absolution by a duly commissioned ambassador of God; there is a liturgical worship, as we should expect with those accustomed to the prayers of the synagogue and the elaborate ritual of the temple; there is a threefold ministry, of apostolic origin—threefold, as the ministry of the Jews (High Priest, Priest and Levite) would foreshadow.

What modern communion is most like the picture? Surely not the Roman. Apostolic it is; we cannot deny that it is a branch of the One, Catholic Church. But where, in this picture of primitive Christianity, do you find an infallible Pope? Where do we find bishops degraded to be merely the local agents of a Pope? Where do you see the mutilated sacrament? Where compulsory confession? Where the excessive reverence of the saints? Where the cultus of the Virgin Mary, her elevation from

the chief place among the saints (which is undoubtedly hers) to the position of Intercessor and Queen of Heaven, through whom we have special access to God?

Nor does the picture find its counterpart in the modern denominations. With them we do not find the threefold ministry, the apostolic order, the frequent communion, the high regard for the sacraments, the unvarying insistence on baptism, and the unfailing faith in the Eucharistic presence. There we have no confirmation, no belief in the ministerial function of blessing and absolving, no high dignity of worship.

Where will you find the purity of the primitive Church as surely as with our own dear Mother, in the Church which we all love, and into which we long to bring all those to whom our affection goes out, that they may have the same blessings and privileges that we enjoy, and with us may know more truly "the beauty of holiness"?

The Browns were confirmed that Spring. When you ask them why they became Episcopalians, their answer runs like this:

I am a Bible Christian. Because I am a Bible Christian, I am an Episcopalian; a Catholic Churchman. ("I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," I say in the Creed.) Because I am a Bible Christian, I am an American Catholic, not a Roman Catholic. Because I am a

Bible Christian, I must belong to some Church, and I choose this, because it seems to me to be not only American and Catholic (or primitive) but Biblical and Evangelical. When I came into the Episcopal Church, I believe I came into the Church of Christ and His Apostles.

DATE DUE

--	--	--

THE KING'S LIBRARY



3000092446

